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PRACTICAL ESSAY
ON THE
DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST,
IN TWO PARTS.

CONTAINING,

- I. The HISTORY,
II. The DOCTRINE, of his DEATH.

BY

WILLIAM M'GILL, D. D.

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF AYR.

NEQUE RELIGIO ULLA SINE SAPIENTIA SUSCIPienda,
NEC ULLA SINE RELIGIONE PROBANDA SAPIENTIA.
LACT.

— το λογικον αδελον γαλα — 1 Pet. ii. 2.

— την λογικην λατρειαν — Rom. xii. 1.

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Dedication.

TO THE REV^D.

WILLIAM DALRYMPLE, D. D.

FIRST MINISTER OF THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF AYR.

THE design of dedicating the following Essay to you, my dear Colleague, is, not to procure it patronage or popularity, which, beyond its real merits, whatever they are, it would be wrong to desire, and vain to expect; nor is it to seize an opportunity of celebrating your praises, for which, were it proper or needful, I am but ill qualified: But, knowing that the subject of this work hath entered deeply into your studies, and trusting that the matter it contains, will not be unpleasing to your piety and candour,

I wish to present it as a testimony of gratitude for many kindnesses, and to leave it as a monument of the happy union and friendship, which, in circumstances not unapt sometimes to create variance, hath always, by the blessing of God, subsisted between us.

With true esteem and affection,

I am,

DEAR SIR,

Your very humble servant,

W^M. M'GILL.

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A
PRACTICAL ESSAY

ON THE

DEATH of JESUS CHRIST.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Death of JESUS CHRIST hath been the subject of much contemplation and discourse among his followers, in all ages; and no wonder, seeing it forms in its design and consequences, a capital part of that *great mystery of godliness*^a, which was revealed to the world through him. Some have regarded this part of the Christian scheme as altogether mysterious*

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and

^a 1 Tim. iii. 16.

* ‘ Though the morality of the Christian religion, says Dr Tillotson, be admirable, and very apt to recommend
‘ itself

and inexplicable. By others it hath been explained but too often in a way more calculated to raise doubts and difficulties in the minds of men, than to remove or obviate them; often also, to minister unprofitable questions and angry controversies, and sometimes even to afford a handle to finners for continuing without fear in their sins.

BUT whatever difficulties or obscurities may attend the subject, nothing I think can be more evident in general, than the moral and practical tendency of this great article of our faith, as set forth in Sacred Scripture: And though it is in vain for us to pry into the secret councils of God^b, and even impious to attempt it; though we cannot pretend to discover all the reasons which might render such measures expedient or necessary in the eyes of infinite wisdom; yet what God hath plainly revealed † for our instruction,

^b Deut. xxix. 29.

‘itself to the unbiaſſed and impartial reaſon of mankind, yet the death of the Son of God is ſuch a ſtumbling-block as is very hard for human reaſon to get over.’ Sermon. 197.—Now, I humbly conceive it may be ſhewn, (but whether or not I ſhall be able to ſhew it, is another queſtion), that this is not ſo great a ſtumbling-block as the worthy Prelate apprehended.

† ‘It is neceſſary to know what God hath revealed concerning the way of pardon by Chriſt: It is impoſſible,

tion, touching the humiliations and sufferings of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, thereon surely it behoves us to meditate^c with humble and devout attention[†], all the days of our lives; and concerning this subject, if I mistake not, there is enough revealed to reward our labour §, to satisfy every pious mind, and to cherish in it the best and happiest dispositions.

WHAT ends the sufferings and death of CHRIST might be intended to serve with regard to other systems of rational beings, or what influence these events may have upon them, we cannot particularly say; nor do I know that any thing is very clearly revealed in Scripture upon that point, except the sub-

A 2

jection

^c Deut. xviii. 19. Josh. i. 8.

^c sible to know more than he hath revealed. If men would forbear to explicate farther, there would be more christianity, and less controversy.' *Whichcot's Aphorisms.*

[†] 'We can never think with too much reverence, nor judge with too much caution, upon subjects of this nature.' *Farquhar's Sermons.*

§ The censure is very just which Cicero threw upon some men in his time, 'who, he says, bestowed great study, and much labour, upon things obscure and difficult, and at the same time not necessary.' *Alterum est vitium, quod quidam nimis magnum studium, multamque operam, in res obscuras atque difficiles conferunt, easdemque non necessarias. Cic. Off. i. 6.*—It is hoped no one will think this censure due to the present attempt.

jection of the angels to our exalted Saviour^d, who for a little time was made lower than they^e; their union with us under him as a common head^f, the discovery which is made to them^g, and their admiration of the divine wisdom and goodness manifested in him^h. But the influence which a due consideration of these events is fitted to have upon us of the human race, for whose benefit they were expressly appointed, is every where declared in the New Testament, and appears to be of the most important and salutary nature. With this our main, if not our only concern lies; and this we should not only endeavour to understand, but to feel in the bottom of our hearts, and to be habitually governed by it through life.

IN order to form a right judgement of any thing as a *mean*, and to make a proper application of it, it is necessary to know the *end* for which it was appointed. Now the end of CHRIST'S humiliation and death, is evidently the same in general with that of his mission and doctrine, to which it is subservient as one important part of the same whole: For, if *the Son of God was manifested for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil*ⁱ;

^d Philip. ii. 9.^e Heb. ii. 9.^f Eph. i. 10.^g Eph. iii. 10.^h 1 Pet. i. 12.ⁱ 1 John iii. 8.

devil; if he came into the world to save sinners^k; if GOD raised him up to bless us, in turning away every one of us from our iniquities^l; these same effects are in a special manner ascribed to the shedding of his blood for us, whereby being washed^m and cleansed from sinⁿ, we obtain the forgiveness of it^o, have our consciences purged from dead works to serve the living God^p, are redeemed unto God^q, redeemed from a vain conversation^r, from all iniquity^s, &c. &c.

THESE passages, and many others to the like purpose, make it evident to every one who reads the New Testament with but the slightest degree of unbiaſſed attention, that whatever the particular ends of CHRIST'S death are, its general and main design coincides entirely with that of his coming into the world, and is the same with it. Consequently, no effect inconsistent with that design, or not favourable to it, can be justly ascribed to his death, or expected to flow therefrom; nay, no effect which doth not clearly tend to promote and accomplish the same salutary design. This is further evident from the nature of the thing: For it is not

A 3

easy

^k 1 Tim. i. 15.

^l 1 John i. 7.

^m Rev. v. 9.

ⁿ Acts iii. 26.

^o Eph. i. 7.

^p 1 Pet. i. 18.

^q Rev. i. 5.

^r Heb. ix. 14.

^s Titus iii. 14.

easy to believe, even if there were no impiety in the thought, that the design of our Saviour's death was to contradict his whole life*, and that he meant thereby at once to undo all that he had been labouring to accomplish in the course of a difficult and painful ministry previous to it. On the contrary, is it not very natural to think that the bloody death to which he voluntarily submitted, was intended to forward the same great end with his life and doctrine, especially since nothing could afford a stronger proof how much he had that end at heart? This truth, plain and obvious as it is, seems to have been sometimes overlooked or forgotten by men in their attempts to explain the Christian scheme, though it ought to be established as a principle in the beginning of all enquiries into the subject now before us, and never lost sight of.

I

* ' In reading and interpreting the Scriptures, we are
 ' to have a regard to the analogy of faith. This is the
 ' Apostle's rule, Rom. xii. 6. It implies having always a
 ' regard to the fundamental principles both of faith and
 ' practice, and never interpreting any particular text of
 ' Scripture in such a sense as to make it contradict any of
 ' those fundamental points of doctrine or good manners,
 ' which we find often repeated in the Holy Scriptures,
 ' and every where the greatest stress laid upon them.'
*Lowth. Direct. for the profitable reading of the Holy Scrip-
 tures.*

I do not pretend to make new discoveries relating to our Saviour's death. It would be strange if any thing of great importance, and altogether new, could be advanced upon a subject so deeply canvassed in the meditations, discourses, and writings of so many wise and learned men, and during so long a series of ages. The subject itself forbids the indulgence of imagination, and demands a close regard to what is written in the Divine Scriptures. Besides, I should esteem it a far greater happiness, not to say any thing wrong or ill-founded, than to say what may appear new and surprising, though true; being more solicitous to avoid error in a matter of such moment, than to procure attention; and to be useful, than to appear original. Neither is it my purpose to enter into a discussion of the nice questions, and learned controversies, which the doctrine of atonement has given birth to. But what I propose, through the help of God, is to collect together (which I have not seen yet done) with as much clearness and precision as possible, the most edifying views and useful instructions held forth in Scripture concerning the death of CHRIST, and the method of reconciliation through him. And as these observations, written for my own improvement in the *first* place, are now sent abroad; it is the benefit of plain

and well-disposed Christians, though unlearned, which is chiefly aimed at by them.

THE whole work will consist of two parts. In the *first*, we propose to consider the history of CHRIST'S death and sufferings, as related by the Holy Evangelists: And in the *second*, to explain the effects and consequences thereof with regard to our salvation.—I wish to give offence to no man, far less to any sincere and humble follower of the LORD JESUS. Rather would I call the attention of Christians to what all are agreed in, than to those minuter and less important points in which some may differ from others. If any tenet or opinion be censured by me, it will be chiefly because it is deemed injurious to virtue and good morals. I would speak the truth in love, and at the same time with the freedom which becomes its dignity; hoping to be acceptable in this discourse, as far as known to all the friends of solid piety; but especially to approve myself to ‘Thee, O
‘ Father of lights, and Judge of all! who
‘ knowest with what views I engage in this
‘ undertaking: And to Thee, in the name
‘ of CHRIST thy dear SON, I lift up my
‘ soul, in humble supplication for some por-
‘ tion of that wisdom which is from above.
‘ Be thou pleased to enlighten my mind with
‘ the

‘ the knowledge of the truth, and to draw
‘ my heart to the love and obedience of it.
‘ Preserve me, O God! from a vain and cri-
‘ minal curiosity, and from every attempt to
‘ be wise above what is written. Suffer me
‘ not to be tainted with any degree of a
‘ proud, wrathful, and contentious spirit;
‘ but give me the spirit of power, and of
‘ love, and of a sound mind; and dispose
‘ me, with due humility and attention, to
‘ consult, receive, and obey thy Holy Oracles,
‘ for thy glory, and my eternal happiness.
‘ Amen.’

PART

ward of his, and to the knowledge of the truth, and to the love and obedience of it. **P A A R T I.**

The History of CHRIST's Death and Sufferings.

BEFORE we enquire into the effects and consequences of CHRIST's death, or the effusion of his blood, it seems highly proper to consider the history of that event as related in the gospels; because an attention to gospel-facts is in general the best way to attain a right understanding of gospel-doctrines; and especially because of the peculiar importance and utility of this event, in the mere knowledge of its circumstances: For I may humbly submit it to the historians of the age, and to all the judicious observers of human nature, whether any event ever happened in the world more fruitful of pious and moral instruction than the crucifixion of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. This historical part will be comprised in fourteen sections.

SECTION I.

Of our SAVIOUR'S Agony in the Garden.

WE begin the history of our SAVIOUR'S sufferings with an account of what passed in the garden of Gethsemane, which was an introduction to, and as it were an abridgement of his passion; where he deliberately tasted, by anticipation, all the horrors of his cross, and overcame them all by the stedfast resolution of his soul. Here we see the SON of GOD actually entered into the field of battle against the last enemy he had to destroy, and preparing himself for the combat; and in this preparatory exercise are strikingly displayed, the extreme bitterness of the cup appointed him to drink, his clear foresight and apprehension of all the baneful ingredients of it, and his perfect piety and submission to his Father's will, heightened and illustrated by the exquisite sensibility of his human frame.

HAVING eaten the passover, instituted the communion of his body and blood, and fortified the minds of his disciples by every argument which Divine Wisdom, joined to the
the

the tenderest human affection, judged proper and seasonable, our LORD withdrew from the city, by night, to a solitary place called Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives; not to escape from the hands of his enemies, for thither he had often resorted on former occasions^a, and the place was well known to the traitor,—but to take a calm and serious view of those awful sufferings which he was just about to enter upon, and to prepare his mind for bearing them, in a manner worthy of himself, and of his Father. And it is certainly the wisdom of all his followers, in this probationary state, not to engage in any difficult trial rashly and thoughtlessly, but with seriousness and deliberation, after having taken a full view of the danger attending it, and summoned up their best principles and resolutions to encounter the same, and endeavoured withal, by prayer and resignation, to interest the protection of Heaven in their favour.

BEING arrived at the garden, our Saviour left the greatest part of his disciples behind, and allowed only three of them, *viz.* Peter, James, and John, to accompany him farther: *Sit ye here^b*, said he to the rest, *while I go and pray yonder*. For great minds cannot easily give vent to their sorrows in public.

^a John xviii, 2.

^b Matth. xxvi. 36.

public*. The eye of the world restrains and suppresses the outward expressions of every strong passion, in those who have a just sense of decency and propriety of conduct, and a regard to the dignity of their character; at least of every passion which immediately respects their own safety and welfare. The passions of fear and grief, when occupied about ourselves, are peculiarly humiliating, and seem more than others to depress us below our rank. It is not without difficulty that the most intimate friends can be made privy to what we suffer in such cases, from the vehement assaults of these passions. Peter, James, and John, had been admitted to greater freedom and intimacy with JESUS at other times; and having lately been eye-witnesses of his greatness on the Mount of Transfiguration, he now chose them to be with him during his deep and secret distress in the garden. To see his severe conflict with human infirmity, would be less apt to shake the faith and fortitude of men who had previously seen his divine glory; and the testimony of three witnesses was more than sufficient to verify the fact.

As soon as he was retired with these three friends, he no longer attempted to conceal the

* See *Observations on the Life of JESUS CHRIST*, by Dr Hunter, a valuable and pleasing performance, ch. xii. § 1.

the secret anguish of his heart. Indeed it was already made manifest to them by outward symptoms; and he did not hesitate to confess, that it was greater than even from these they were able to apprehend: *My soul, said he, is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death^c*. It is an expression of extreme affliction; like that of the Psalmist, when he says, *The sorrows of death compassed me about: the pains of hell gat hold on me: I found trouble and sorrow^d*. As if our Lord had said, 'I am agitated with mortal sorrows, and feel already something like the pangs of dissolution.' By this ingenuous confession, he bespoke the attention and sympathy of his companions in so sad an hour; and it was such an instance of respect and confidence towards them, as should have roused all their zeal. At the same time he gave them an order, more necessary to be observed on their own account than on his: *Tarry ye here, and watch with me^e: Pray that ye enter not into temptation^f*. Then, withdrawing to a little distance from them, that, apart by himself, he might meditate with more freedom, and disburthen his full heart before God, he kneeled down, and said, *O my Father! if it be possible, let this cup*

^c Matth. xxvi. 38. Mark xiv. 33.

^d Psal. cxvi. 3.

^e Matth. xxvi. 38.

^f Luke xxii. 40.

cup pass from me ; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt ^a.

THIS prayer betrays no distrust of God's love, or sense of his displeasure. On the contrary, it expresseth, in the very address of it, a full persuasion of his friendship, and a perfect confidence in him, *O my Father!*—Then, to shew the horror and aversion of nature for such dreadful sufferings as he had now before him, he puts up an earnest, but duly qualified request: ' Let me escape
' this bitter potion, and be saved from the
' death of the cross, if the great and holy
' purposes of thy government admit of it,
' and no divine decree opposes.'—*If it be possible*, &c. Here was the simple desire of nature, which religion requires us not to extirpate, but only to regulate and govern. Therefore, to complete the petition already offered up, not to retract or correct it, he adds immediately, *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt*; ' I resign myself absolutely to thy
' disposal, and embrace with perfect acquiescence and submission, whatever is agreeable to Thee.'—He had in effect put up the same prayer on a former occasion ^b.

HAVING spent some time in these devotions, he returned to his three disciples^c, if not

^a Matth. xxvi. 39.

^b Joh. xii. 27.

^c Matth. xxvi. 40.

not with a view to *receive* comfort, of which he had so much need, and which he had reason to expect from friends in a season of common danger and distress peculiarly great to him; yet certainly to *give* comfort, and especially to fortify them against the approaching trial. But he found them overpowered with sleep, partly perhaps through long want of rest, and partly, as we know, through sorrow^k. This conduct indicated a disposition unsuitable to their present circumstances, not sufficiently touched either with their own danger, or with the afflictions of their Master, nor duly attentive to his commands. But as he knew it to be the effect of human infirmity, rather than intentional neglect, he awaked them with a gentle reproof: *What! could ye not watch with me one hour?* when your own situation too did so much require it! *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.* And he subjoined these memorable words, serving both as an apology for their past conduct, and as a motive to greater vigilance for the future: *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*^l. This was what in some degree he himself now felt; and it shews how his own trials dispose him to pity and succour us^m. 'I know your sincerity,' would he say; 'but great

^k Luke xxii. 45. ^l Matth. xxvi. 41. ^m Heb. iv. 15.

' great is the infirmity of human nature
' which you have to struggle with.'—After
this, he went away, and put up the same
prayer a second time^a, but with more ear-
nestness, prostrating himself also with his
face to the ground, which proves at once the
severity of his affliction, and the steadiness
of his faith. Nay, he repeated it a third time^o,
always with increasing marks of pain and
grief, though with perfect resignation, be-
cause it was not the effect of haste and rash-
ness, but of deliberate and just reflection.
And one Evangelist informs us, that he was
in an agony^p, or laboured under such pain-
ful anxiety of mind, as not only threw him
into a profuse sweat, but made his sweat issue
through the pores of his body in a thick fizy
manner, like great drops of blood. Many in-
terpreters think his sweat was blood itself.
However this be, in the extremity of his af-
fliction, an Angel was sent from Heaven to
strengthen him^q, just, as it happened, at the
close of his temptation in the wilderness^r; to
convince us that he was not now, any more
than at other times, the object of his Father's
wrath, and that he did not pray in vain.—
Such were the circumstances of our Saviour's
agony in the garden.

B

BUT,

^a Matth. xxvi. 42. ^o Verse 44. ^p Luke xxii. 44. ^q Verse 43.

^r Matth. iv. 11.

BUT, to what cause are we to ascribe this great horror and perturbation of mind which now appeared in the SON of GOD ? Did he not know his Father's decree with relation to these sufferings ? Had he not often foretold them to his disciples ? And why then did he imagine it possible to escape them, or make such an urgent request for that purpose to God ? And whence came it that the Holy JESUS was so extremely dejected in the view of his cross, when many blessed Martyrs have proceeded to endure as great, or greater tortures, with chearfulness ?—These things have appeared very wonderful to many, to some utterly unaccountable ; and those who have attempted to explain them, have by no means been uniform in their explications.

It should seem there is some obscurity in the subject, which we cannot pretend entirely to remove. Yet several things may be said to this purpose, on clear and certain grounds, and of an useful and edifying tendency. Whatever we do, let us not have recourse to arbitrary suppositions ; but pay a strict regard to the Sacred History,—to our Saviour's character,—to the circumstances he was now placed in,—and the dangerous and awful prospect immediately before his eyes.—May I be permitted
to

to offer the following observations, not presuming to unfold all that passed in the mind of the Blessed JESUS on this occasion, but earnestly desirous to learn of him in every situation, and to overlook no circumstance of his passion which may be profitable to us.

FIRST, then, if we consider the sufferings themselves which were to be endured by our LORD, together with his clear and distinct foreknowledge of them, we shall see that his great uneasiness on their near approach, and his earnest prayers to be exempted from them if agreeable to the will of God, were not without just cause: for, these sufferings were undoubtedly very terrible to flesh and blood, not to speak of any uncommon delicacy either of body or mind; and being now just at hand, they appeared all at once to the apprehension of JESUS in their full magnitude. The Son of God knew himself to be already betrayed and sold, by one who had been admitted to the honours of a chosen friend;—that his person was soon to be seized on this very spot, by a band of ruffian soldiers;—that he was to undergo a trial before different tribunals, in each of which new insults and indignities awaited him, and at length to be condemned as an evil-doer of the worst kind;—that he was to be shamefully abused

by merciless guards and keepers, without a single friend to espouse his cause, or afford him the protection which is due to common criminals;—to be scourged by their sacrilegious hands, exposed to the populace in circumstances of distress, sufficient, if possible, to move the heart of cruelty itself;—and in conclusion, nailed to a cross, hung up there to expire by lingering torture, in company with two malefactors, who had forfeited their lives to public justice, and yet should experience more lenity than he; and all this in the view of many thousand spectators, hard-hearted enough, most of them, to revile and deride him in his last moments.—Certainly there was in this horrid train of calamities, something very shocking to human nature; and the firmest hero, if he acted without affectation, might be allowed to shrink a little in the immediate prospect of these sufferings. Such a group of frightful objects, uniting their force, and rushing in upon the mind of JESUS together in the same instant, would naturally assault his resolution with more violence than the actual enduring of the evils they brought, when encountered separately, and in succession one after another.

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THE external appearances of fortitude often proceed from other causes very foreign to that of virtue itself; as from insensibility of temper, or a studied resolution not to discover our fears and griefs, whatever they are: neither of which causes had any place in our Divine Master, nor ought to have in us. He was evidently of a tender, mild, and compassionate temper, which is usually accompanied with a quick sensibility to unmerited disgrace and pain. The ancient Stoicks maintained, in spite of nature, that pain is no evil. There are none more remarkable for contempt of pain than wild savages, of whom it is related, that they will defy and provoke the ingenuity of their tormentors in killing them. There is also a ferocious hardness, or rather a brutal stupidity, often seen in the vilest malefactors, who glory in meeting death with apparent indifference and contempt. The Saviour of the world was far from such principles and dispositions. He felt that horror and reluctance to pain and ignominy, which is as innocent as it is inseparable from human nature; and since he felt it, he was above the affectation of concealing or dissembling it in the proper time and place. He made no public parade of his sorrows; but with a candid simplicity of heart, he confessed them to his

friends in private ; and with humble confidence and resignation, prayed to his Father, that if it were possible, or fit in itself, and consistent with his will, this cup might pass from him : For he seems not to have considered his excruciating death, in the manner it happened, as previously fixed by an *absolute* divine decree. His own predictions, and those of the ancient prophets, concerning this event, might be *conditional*, though expressed in absolute terms, as, is certainly the case with many other prophecies recorded in Scripture* : And at any rate, prophecies of future events cannot hinder the mind to be affected with present objects ; nor is the accomplishment of them the proper and direct rule of our duty, but only the will of God, according to the circumstances in which we are placed. Our Lord failed not to use all fit means to prevent the discouragement of his Apostles, when he should suffer, the fall of Peter, the treachery of Judas, and the destruction of Jerusalem*, though he had foretold these things absolutely.

As

* 2 Sam. xii. Jonah iii.

* See Bishop Newcome's excellent observations on our Lord's conduct, &c. p. 396. And Lardner's Sermons on CHRIST'S Sufferings, whose ideas, after the most careful examination, I have often been obliged to adopt in this history, and even to borrow his expressions sometimes.

As to his own sufferings, therefore, tho' distinctly foreseen and predicted by him, he felt what was natural in the near view of them; and he did not suppress what he felt, willing that they might be averted if God saw fit, but otherwise willing to bear them.—If some pious Christians under the reign of persecution, have ambitiously courted the crown of martyrdom*, and rejoiced when they found it, what shall we say?—That their behaviour was a model of perfection? No:—Rather that their zeal had transported them beyond the bounds of reason; and that their integrity was more to be commended than their judgement. They strove for the truth; but some of them did not strive lawfully. To seek such combats, was not their duty; but by all innocent means to avoid them. So their Divine Master both

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* It is observed in that valuable monument of antiquity, the Epistle of the Church of Smyrna, concerning the martyrs who suffered there in the second century, that 'Polycarp waited until he should be delivered up, even as 'our Lord did,' &c. And the same epistle afterwards makes mention of one Quintus, who had prevailed on himself to appear of his own accord before the Proconsul, and had excited others to follow his example; yet was dismayed in the hour of trial, and persuaded to renounce christianity. 'Wherefore,' add they, 'we commend not 'those who voluntarily repair to the judgement-seat; for 'the Gospel hath not so taught.'—*Account of the Martyrs at Smyrna and Lyons.* Edin. 1776.

taught and acted^t; and certainly He, who, notwithstanding a natural dread and horror for the death of the cross, declined not to meet it in the path of duty, hath set us a pattern much more reasonable, more amiable, and more worthy of imitation. It may be added, that the Martyrs, beside the succours of religion, were often supported and animated by the exhortations, examples, and applauses of their friends, and the distinguished honours shewn to the memory of those who had suffered before them in the same cause. JESUS had not any one support or encouragement in his sufferings, but what flowed from conscious innocence and virtue. Indeed his situation was quite singular and unexampled, and different in many respects from that of any of his followers.

BUT, *secondly*, might not that great anxiety which JESUS felt in the garden, arise in part from an apprehensiveness about the difficulty of maintaining a becoming temper and deportment, under such unexperienced and awful trials as did now present themselves to him? The Apostle assures us, that our Saviour *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*^v; and that he learned obedience

^t Matth. x. 23.^v Heb. iv. 15.

obedience (i. e. the difficulty of obedience*) *by the things which he suffered*^w; which were so appointed for him, that he might be better qualified to *succour us when we are tempted*^x. In every part of life, indeed, and at death, his behaviour was without defect or blemish. But was it rendered so complete without any trouble or effort? Certain it is, that in the most innocent and virtuous characters among men, the bias of animal nature will sometimes draw contrary to duty; and the senses and passions will discover a reluctance sufficient to call forth painful exertions of moral and religious principle, in order to perform what is right. The Blessed JESUS was made like unto us, though more pure and perfect. The Divine Nature in him did not absorb the human, or exempt him from the sinless infirmities thereof: And indeed, without any share of such feelings, he would not have been liable to temptation, much less actually tempted: He would have had no need for watchfulness and prayer, the duties he was now practising; nor could he have at all distinguished between his own will, and that of his Father. He always behaved, it is true, with the utmost propriety, and

^w Heb. v. 8.^x Chap. ii. 18.

* The difficulty of obedience is the proper lesson to be learned from suffering.

and performed the most difficult acts of virtue with admirable ease and dignity. That ease, however, we may well believe, was not the effect of carelessness and sloth, of uncultivated nature, or even of heavenly endowments alone; but of strict attention, and perfect moral discipline, joined with supernatural gifts. Although the mutual struggles of reason and passion are a consequence of imperfection, yet the victory of reason derives more value from that very circumstance. Take away from a man's actions, all care, and attention, and effort in favour of virtue, and you exceedingly lessen, or even reduce to nothing the merit of them, be they ever so good in themselves.

MOREOVER, our Blessed LORD sustained a very high and extraordinary character among men, and had a sublime standard of perfection in his eye. Hitherto, his whole conduct had been worthy of the only begotten SON of GOD, the chosen Messenger and Favourite of Heaven. He was determined it should continue so to the last. But the trials now to be encountered were new and singular:—trials they were, to which many severe ones already past were but a gentle prelude: And what would be the consequence of any unsuitable deportment under them? any
failure

failure in the duties of charity, fortitude, and resignation, thus put to the sharpest proof?—The very idea of it was dreadful. —These considerations may not unreasonably be thought to have made a strong impression on the pure and exalted spirit of the LORD JESUS, and to have filled him with painful apprehension, in this preparatory view which he took of his last sufferings. A sentiment of this kind he had expressed some good while ago, on another occasion: *I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!*¹ Knowing the death he had to suffer, he looked forward to it at a distance, with deep concern and anxiety; and could never set his mind at ease, till so great a trial should be happily over: But now the hour was come, and the danger would naturally appear to him in its most frightful aspect.

It is the part of a brave man to fear danger when he sees it approaching, and by all possible and lawful means to provide against it, but to remain calm and intrepid in the actual conflict. Cowards, on the contrary, are apt to boast of the mighty things they can do, while no danger is near; but the hour of trial arriving, soon exposes
their

¹ Luke xii. 50.

their meanness and irresolution. Thus Solomon says, *A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil; but the fool rageth, and is confident*². How often has the sight of racks, and other instruments of torture, overcome the constancy even of virtuous minds! And how many instances have there been of good men, who, by indulging themselves in too great security, have been surpris'd into shameful miscarriages, and in one fatal hour have lost the fruit of many former victories!—The Apostle Peter persuaded himself that his resolution was invincible, in adhering to CHRIST; and yet, how soon did it forsake him in the hour of danger! Surely it behoves us, when the storm gathers, and hazardous trials are impending, to be much concerned that they may not make us disgrace our character and hopes; may not successfully tempt us to say or do any thing dishonourable to God, or of bad example to our brethren. This is even the principal circumstance* which renders the furnace of affliction

² Prov. xiv. 16.

* The Christians of Lyons, having spoken of some among them who had apostatised under persecution, subjoin these words: ' Indeed we were all greatly dismayed by reason of the uncertainty of the event in the day of trial: ' We did not fear the tortures inflicted; but, looking forward unto the end, we dreaded lest any-one should fall.'

Account of the Martyrs at Smyrna and Lyons. Edin. 1776.

affliction formidable to good men. They are not so much afraid of suffering pain, as of losing in any degree their innocence and virtue : It is this they are mainly concerned about. We should endeavour to avoid such great trials, or even any trials whatever, as far as duty permits ; and if they are inevitable, should arm ourselves to meet them as well as we can : and though our preparation itself may cost us no small pain, we shall undoubtedly behave the better for it in the time of action.—Add to these things, in the

THIRD place, that the bodily frame, and the state of the animal spirits, have necessarily, in this life, a great influence on the present temper of the mind. There are times when nothing appears hard or difficult to us : There are other times, when small difficulties appear unsurmountable. This is one of the innocent infirmities of human nature. If the body be in a weak and exhausted state, the mind is more apt to be depressed in the view of any great danger or affliction. Something of this kind may have concurred with other circumstances to occasion our Saviour's dejection in the garden. We do not find indeed, that he was ever afflicted with any of those bodily diseases which are the usual indications and forerunners of our mortality ;

lity ; but he was not exempted from bodily pain, fatigue, and weariness ^a. The labours he had undergone, were very great ever since he entered on his public ministry ; but more especially of late, since his last coming to Jerusalem, when he was employed in an almost incessant course of teaching, either in the temple, or only with his disciples and a few friends in private. And now, at the close of all these toils, without a moment's respite, it remained for him to go through the long series of his bitter sufferings. In such a state, no wonder they should appear peculiarly formidable, though they had not been so near at hand. On former occasions, he had often spoken of them to his disciples with perfect composure, sometimes also with visible marks of trouble and uneasiness ^b ; but he always persisted with undaunted resolution, to declare the truth which he had received from his Father, and to finish his work, though he knew that that very thing was to bring him to the death of the cross. In the garden, he was still determined as much as ever, not to recede from duty, for fear of these sufferings ; but he could not hinder the near view of them from striking his mind more forcibly than heretofore, nor avoid feeling, at this awful moment, an unusual horror

^a John iv. 6.^b Chap. xii. 27.

horror and averſion for them.—But, in the *fourth*, and

LAST place, laying his own ſufferings entirely out of the queſtion, it may be reckoned certain that the SAVIOUR of the world felt ſtrongly for others on this occaſion, both friends and enemies. His dear little flock were ſoon to be ſcattered, becauſe the Shepherd was about to be ſmitten^c. The firmeſt of his friends and followers were, by his ignominious ſufferings, to be for a time overwhelmed with ſorrow and deſpair ; their faith ſhaken to its foundation, and all their fondeſt hopes extinguished. One diſciple would be tempted to diſclaim all connection with him. Another would, by betraying him, become a ſon of perdition^d, and a monument of divine vengeance, notwithstanding every ſuitable admonition and warning to prevent it. And the Jewiſh people, who were *his own* in a peculiar manner, and whom he would ſo often have gathered together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, were haſtening, by the blood of his croſs, to fill up the meaſure of their iniquities, and to bring ſuch ruin on themſelves and their children as never beſel any other nation. Nor was his croſs to prove a ſtumbling block only to them.

^c Matth. xxvi. 31.

^d John xiii. 21.

them. Alas! how many others in all nations and ages of the world, would disdain to become the followers of a Master whose life had terminated in the infamy of a public execution. And what multitudes of the human race, and even amongst the followers of his Name, would finally perish, notwithstanding all his benevolent zeal, and after he should have endured the death of the cross to save them. These lamentable events, not unforeseen, or unattended to, pierced the heart of JESUS at this time, and shook his whole frame. The generous and noble mind is afflicted at the pain it gives to friends, though undesignedly: it regrets the unhappy lot of enemies, even when it suffers by them most unjustly; and is still more uneasy on their account than its own. Such was the temper of the Blessed JESUS! *Weep not for me, ye daughters of Jerusalem*, said he; *but weep for yourselves, and for your children, &c.*^c Was it not desirable that these evils might be prevented, if it could be done without prejudice to any higher interest? And might not the SON of GOD fitly pray for the averting of such miseries, provided Infinite Wisdom saw meet?—It may be added, that the SON of GOD felt agonizing pangs in this melancholy hour, at the foresight of that fierce opposition

^c Luke xxiii. 28. &c.

tion which his religion was destined to meet with in the world ; of the unrighteous methods which would be taken, whether by enemies to extirpate, or by mistaken friends to propagate it ; and of those seas of innocent blood which would be shed on occasion of the doctrine of heavenly peace and love. He was fore amazed at those enormous corruptions which were to be introduced into his pure and perfect religion, through the carelessness, fraud, or wicked inventions of men ; and at the divisions, the strifes, the enmities, persecutions, and manifold vices which were often to reign in the bosom of his church ; all serving to frustrate the design of his death, and of his whole mediation.—O Father ! Lord of heaven and earth ! must thy Son suffer such things, and with so little benefit to the unhappy race of men ? *But thy will be done !*

THUS we have mentioned divers probable causes of our Saviour's agony in the garden ; but have said nothing of God's withdrawing his countenance from him, or inflicting secret torments on his soul, because that seems injurious to the character of God, and not agreeable to the truth of the gospel history. JESUS no doubt experienced at this time, a diminution of the sensible consolations of his

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Father's love, through the great pressure of his griefs and fears, which for a while would not suffer him, as formerly, to attend to such contemplations. But he soon found even these in the ministry of the Angel that appeared to him; and he did not, in the depth of his agony, consider himself as suffering under the divine indignation: nor was there any reason why he should, since it is certain he was never more the object of his Father's love, than at this very time, when, notwithstanding all the reluctances of nature, he voluntarily determined to *lay down his life for the sheep*^f. And if God seem for a season to neglect us in our sufferings, while we are sincerely attached to him, and to shut the door of his mercy against us, it is not a mark of his wrath, but a trial which his wisdom hath sometimes allotted to wise and good men^g. In such cases, let us still, after their example, and that of our Divine Saviour, resolutely submit to God's will, holding fast our integrity and our confidence in him, and assuring ourselves of the happy issue of all our troubles. The causes of our Lord's extraordinary distress in the garden of Gethsemane, I have endeavoured to deduce from other facts related in the same history. They will be allowed, it is hoped, most or all of them,

^f John x. 17.^g Psal. xlii.

them, to have contributed to it in a certain degree; and if they are not sufficient to account for this singular and important fact, there is none of them but may at least be useful for our instruction. From the whole we may learn, among other things, these following lessons.

1. THE benefit of persevering watchfulness and prayer, amidst great difficulties; which appears conspicuous in the case of our blessed SAVIOUR now before us, not only from the circumstance of an Angel being sent from heaven to strengthen him, but likewise from the words of the Apostle to the Hebrews, who, undoubtedly referring to our Saviour's devotions in the garden, says, that *in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, he was heard in that he feared*^a, i. e. say some, He was heard for his piety and dutiful submission to God; or, according to others, He was heard so as to be delivered from his fear. Be this as it will, *He was heard*;—his prayers were not fruitless and unavailing. He was not indeed saved from death or suffering; *that* he did not absolutely pray for: But he was strengthened and enabled with a divine fortitude and magna-

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nimity,

^a Heb. v. 7.

nimity, to sustain all the miseries of his cross. The like favour may be firmly expected by every sincere Christian. Are you under any great pressure of sorrow, or fear of evil to come? Go to God—commit your cause to him—implore with fervour his protection and deliverance from the evil, only so far as it may be agreeable to his will. Then will he hear and succour you. If he does not see fit to avert the calamity, he will be with you, and carry you through it with safety and with honour. Again,

2. We have, in this passage, an authentic proof both of our Saviour's real humanity, and of the inviolable truth and impartiality of his historians. The Blessed JESUS is not here exhibited to us on the splendid theatre of public life, instructing the multitudes, and astonishing them by the manifestations of his divine wisdom and power. Had we seen him only in these circumstances, we might have been tempted to doubt whether he was really a partaker of flesh and blood like us; which would have deprived us in a great measure of the benefit of his example. This is said to have been the error of an ancient sect of Christians, who held, that JESUS suffered and died in appearance only, not in reality; he being, in their apprehension, incapable of real suffering.

suffering. But to confute that notion, we here see him in a more dark and retired scene of life, which, if he had pleased, he might easily have concealed from all the world. We are invited to follow him into solitude, and to be witnesses of his secret fears and sorrows. The inmost recesses of his heart are laid open to us, in one of the most interesting situations that ever fell to the lot of humanity. And what see we here, other than a Great and Noble Soul struggling with the innocent infirmities of human nature, and at length gaining a complete victory over them? His mind taking a view of the tremendous prospect before him, recoils upon itself. He feels a momentary dejection, irresolution, and horror. He confesses it to his friends, and applies to Heaven for relief; but entertains not the least thought of departing from the path of duty to avoid pain, and receives his bitter cup with readiness and complacency, as given him by his Father.—What think ye now of CHRIST? whose Son is he? He is the Son of Man, 'tis true: But, do you find any thing in him inconsistent with the character of the SON of GOD? I hope not.

CERTAINLY the Apostles had as little apprehension of any such thing, as their blessed Master, or they would not have so minutely

related this secret passage, known to no man but him and themselves, when they might have easily suppressed the whole transaction without violating the laws of truth. Or, if they had been drawing a character of fictitious excellence according to their own fancies, and had found our Saviour's behaviour in the garden as unaccountably weak, as some have done, they might have described him in another manner. But they were not afraid to exhibit their Master in every light in which he really appeared, and to make us acquainted with the private as well as the public transactions of his life; far from thinking they did thereby injure his Name and Religion. They aimed at the undisguised simplicity of truth; and whether you think the conduct of JESUS on this occasion great or mean, laudable or otherwise, you have it from them just as it was. And for a farther proof of their impartiality, they have not concealed their own behaviour in this instance, which was really blameable. But indeed this part of our Saviour's life, when viewed with the eye of candour, and in its own light, I mean that which the rest of his history throws upon it, will, it is presumed, appear truly edifying and exemplary, worthy to be published to all mankind, and highly deserving their most serious attention. Furthermore,

3. WE learn from this memorable passage, that it is not needful to condemn ourselves, far less to despair of the favour of God, because we feel and are affected with the evils of this life, and do not possess a stoical insensibility; nay, that we may lawfully pray against those evils, and seek to be exempted from them. It is even our duty so to do, provided we do it under proper limitations, and with due submission to God's holy will. Do your sorrows extort groans and tears from you?—Be not afraid—the same thing happened to your Divine Master, who graciously accommodated himself to our weakness. Take courage after his example, and wait patiently for the salvation of God. It is not the business of true religion to render us regardless of the calamities of life, or to make us affect a seeming indifference about sufferings, to which we never can be really indifferent; but to teach us how to bear affliction, without being deterred from our duty by it, and without repinings and murmurings against Providence.

4. LASTLY, The great lesson which we ought to learn from the present, as well as every other passage of our Saviour's life, is a deliberate and unreserved compliance with the will of God, and submission to his dis-

posals with respect to us in all circumstances, how contrary soever they may seem to our deservings, or shocking to our natural feelings and inclinations; though our passions revolt against them; and though we find ourselves at one and the same time assaulted with the greatest injustice and cruelty by the world, and left destitute of inward consolations from above. Such was the submission and compliance now exemplified by our Blessed Saviour. Having been guilty of no sin, he was not liable to death by the divine constitution, any more than Adam before he ate the forbidden fruit. Nor was there any human power able to deprive him of life, till he saw fit voluntarily to resign it. But, for the good of men, he came to make a willing oblation of it, and to resume it again on more advantageous terms; as he himself declares, *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment (or commission) have I received of my Father*¹. It was the Father's will, that his beloved Son, after having taught and confirmed true religion, and set an example of it, should for great and wise purposes be delivered up to the Jews; who

¹ John x. 17. &c.

who would condemn him to a cruel death: and the time was now come, when this will was to be fulfilled. Often on former occasions, had JESUS wonderfully saved himself from the violence of his enemies, because his hour was not yet come^k; nor was there any power wanting for his deliverance at this time more than at others. But the work which his Father had given him to do, was now finished, all to that part of laying down his life on the cross; and therefore he no longer sought to escape from the malice and power of the Jewish rulers, but commended his cause to Heaven, and overcame the horrors and reluctances of nature*, by reflecting on his past life, which gave him the highest satisfaction, and on his eminent and peculiar interest in the favour of God; and that though now forsaken and persecuted by men, he really merited every mark of their esteem, and would in process of time be sure to gain it from all the wise and good. He considered
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^k Mark iii. 7. Luke iv. 30. John x. 39.

* If St Paul expressed a happy resignation in the near prospect of martyrdom, 2 Tim. iv. 6,—8. it is certain our Saviour exercised the same during the whole course of his awful sufferings; and if, in the latter case, there were natural reluctances expressed at the beginning which were not in the former, the example is upon the whole so much the more perfect, to say nothing of the difference of circumstances.

*the joy that was set before him*¹; the benefit which would redound to mankind from his death^m, and which was truly great and important, though less than divine benevolence wished; the necessity of that event to the fulfilling of the Scripturesⁿ, and of one principal end of his mission^o; and finally, that how bitter soever the cup might be in itself, it was administered to him by his Father, whom he loved supremely, and whose commands it was his highest ambition to execute. Having, by these considerations, and by the extraordinary succour vouchsafed to him from above, reconciled his mind to the severe duty, he not only professed obedience to the will of God, but nobly performed it in every part when it came to the trial. And this was that *offering and sacrifice of himself which he gave, of such a sweet-smelling savour unto God*^p. This was his obedience unto death, in reward of which God did so highly exalt him^q; And this, Christian, is the pattern which you and I are required to imitate. But, who of himself is able to act thus?—‘ I beseech thee, ‘ O Lord God Almighty! to help my infirmities by thy good Spirit; and give me ‘ grace, in all circumstances, to bring my passions and inclinations under due subjection ‘ to

¹ Heb. xii. 2.^m John xii. 24.ⁿ Matth. xxvi. 54.^o John xii. 27.^p Eph. v. 2.^q Philip. ii. 8.

‘ to thy holy will; that whatever I am called
‘ to do or to suffer, I may be enabled, after
‘ the example of my Saviour, to say from the
‘ bottom of my heart, and with an effectual
‘ resolution to reduce it to practice, Not my
‘ will, O heavenly Father! but thine be done.’

Let us return to our history.

SECT. II.

SECTION II.

JESUS made a Prisoner.

WE come now to the first scene of our SAVIOUR's public sufferings, at which some begin the history of his passion, when he was arrested in the night-time as a criminal, by an armed multitude*, with authority from the Chief Priests, and with Judas the traitor for their guide. And in this situation, so humiliating according to the world, JESUS reassumes, if I may say so, his own greatness. If he seemed to betray any marks of human weakness in the near prospect and contemplation of his sufferings, it is certain he discovered nothing of that kind when actually engaged with them. You would

* The Jews had a body of men, of their own nation, appointed to keep guard in the temple at all seasons, under the command of an officer of the priestly order, called Captain of the Temple. Acts iv. i. v. 24,—26. But, by way of reinforcement to this guard, the Romans were wont, upon the great Jewish Festivals, to send, at the request of the Chief Priests, a detachment of their own men, to assist the Jewish soldiers in keeping order, and preventing disturbances among so vast a concourse of people as these solemnities drew together. It seems to have been a part of this united band that was sent to apprehend JESUS.

would think him suddenly changed into another man. A little before, notwithstanding the resignation of his heart, you find him sunk and dispirited, his whole frame agitated with fear and sorrow, begging to be delivered from his passion. Now, you behold him full of courage, animating his Apostles, going forth to meet his enemies; declaring, with a resolution that confounded them, who he was; forbidding all resistance, and meekly giving himself up into their hands, because it was his Father's will. For, *that the world may know that I love the Father, said he, even as the Father gave me commandment, so I do*^a. May we not conclude that it was partly from retirement and prayer he derived this strength? of which his followers are encouraged to hope for suitable measures always according to their need, if they imitate him in the same duties. For certain, however, this is the true test of virtue, not only to profess, but to perform; not to *will* only, but likewise to *do*.

It is true, the very depth of his affliction in the garden, did not unfit him for any duty which the occasion required. It did not make him abandon himself, or forget his friends, or omit any thing that reasonably could

^a John xiv. 31.

could be done to prepare them for the approaching storm. Having once and again exhorted them to watch and pray, when he came to them the third time, and found them asleep, he said to them, *Sleep on now, and take your rest^b, ' for me, as long as you ' please;—but enough of that^{*}. ' The hour is come, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be advancing; behold he is at hand that doth betray me^c!* Scarcely had he ended these words, when the band of armed soldiers appeared, advancing with a hostile and menacing aspect, attended by a croud of people, and with lanterns and torches carried before them, that they might search for him in every lurking place, if necessary, and might be sure to seize him in spite of all resistance. They had Judas at their head, who undertook to shew them the way; and as he could not but know JESUS in the night-time better than they, though some of them no doubt had seen him before, he gave them a signal by which they might distinguish the Master from his disciples: *Whomsoever I shall kiss, said he, that is the man you are sent for; hold him fast^d.*

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^b Mark xiv. 41.^{*} Matth. xxvi. 46.^c Verse 48.^d Or, ' Are you sleeping still, and taking your rest?^e Enough of that, &c.' ἀπέχει, i. e. ἀποχρα, ἐξαρχει. Hesych. Satis est. Castal.

THE appearance of such a formidable force coming to apprehend JESUS in the night-season, just after his secret agony, did not however dismay or terrify him: He met it with a firm and majestic composure. The traitor coming up to him, said, *Hail Master! and kissed him*^a;—an address to appearance very kind and courteous, but which concealed a treachery more black than that of Joab towards Amasa, when he said to him, *Art thou in health, my brother*^f? and with the right hand took him by the beard to kiss him, while, with a sword in his left hand, he run him through the body. This was the completion of Judas's ingratitude and perfidy, and thus he earned his thirty pieces of silver. Hail Master! said he, and kissed him.

To which JESUS replied, with equal meekness and dignity, *Friend, wherefore art thou come*^g? Tell me, friend, what is the true intention of this visit. Is it not that you, my companion, are become my enemy, and have contrived to betray your Master with the semblance of friendship? *Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss*^h?

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^a Matth. xxvi. 49.

^f Sam. xx. 9.

^g Matth. xxvi. 50.

^h Luke xxii. 48.

FEW evils in human life are more hard to bear, than the ingratitude and treachery of those from whom we have reason to expect attachment and love; and the farther we ourselves are from any taint of these crimes, the more sensibly do we feel the baseness of them in others. David more than once experienced this treatment; and he speaks of it in terms which plainly shew how much he was hurt by it: *Yea mine own familiar friend, said he, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me*¹. And again, *For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have born it; nor was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance*². The daring spirit of Cæsar is said to have been quite overpowered when he saw his friend Brutus among the conspirators that killed him. But beside these common circumstances in the treachery of Judas, there were others peculiarly adapted to pierce the heart of our Saviour on this occasion; for JESUS had been at pains to form this man, with his other Apostles, to the model of his own divine temper, and had used every possible precaution, in a moral way, to preserve him from perdition. He had now the mortification to see

¹ Psal. xli. 9.² Psal. lv. 12. 13.

see this vessel of wrath prepared in his own family, and all the pains taken to amend him absolutely lost and thrown away. And what a stumbling-block would it be to weak minds, against the faith of the Gospel, that its Author was betrayed by a companion, a confident, and an apostle, who, if he could not be reformed, should, as it might be thought, have been long ago expelled from the Sacred College?

THESE things doubtless had a powerful tendency, at this juncture, either to depress or to exasperate the mind of our LORD. But he rose superior to both temptations. Recollected and calm, he receives the salutation of the traitor without uttering one passionate or abusive word; but takes care to let him know, that he was not ignorant of his perfidy, nor insensible of the wrong done by it: And he gores his guilty conscience with two simple questions, put to him in the mildest terms: *Friend, wherefore art thou come? — Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?*

IF JESUS shewed a wonderful meekness in speaking to Judas, he displayed great majesty in his address to the armed multitude. Stepping forward with an undaunted mien, he asked them, *Whom seek ye*¹? Not that he

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¹ John xviii. 4,—9.

was ignorant of their errand, but that he might hear it from their own mouth, and have a fit opportunity of shewing who he was. Some of them answered, JESUS of NAZARETH. It looks as if they had not courage to tell him in plain terms, *We seek you* ; but they said, JESUS of NAZARETH. *And he said unto them, I am He.* For, though he had fled from the people at a former time when they wanted to make him a King, he now presented himself to them of his own accord, when they sought him to his cross, since duty required it. This intrepid profession, the clear fruit of conscious innocence, had a surprising effect on these servants of unrighteousness. No sooner had JESUS said, *I am He*, than *they went backward, and fell to the ground.* You would think they were a company of malefactors who had just received the sentence of death, and that JESUS was their Sovereign, and their Judge.

WE read in the Roman History, that when one Gallus was sent to assassinate the celebrated Marius in prison, the latter, with a stern countenance, said to him, upon his entering the prison, *Wretch, darest thou offer to kill Caius Marius?* At which the man, though inured to deeds of violence, was so confounded and intimidated, that he returned

ed without executing his purpose. The like is said to have happened to certain soldiers who were ordered to go and take off the head of Marcus Antonius, a famous orator: they were so struck and charmed with his eloquence, that they had not power for some time to shed his blood.—These passages bear some resemblance to the one before us; but they are far inferior in point of dignity to it. For, here, a band of soldiers and officers, furnished with weapons of various kinds, and sent by their rulers to apprehend a single defenceless man, upon only hearing from him that he was the man they wanted, were seized with such astonishment and terror, that their joints shook under them, and they fell to the ground. In them was literally fulfilled the prayer of the Psalmist: *Let them be ashamed and confounded together, that seek after my soul to destroy it: Let them be driven backward, and put to shame, that wish me evil*^m.

* GREAT indeed is the force of innocence and virtue, confronted with conscious guilt. *The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion*ⁿ. Good reason had

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^m Psal. xl. 14.

ⁿ Prov. xxviii. 1.

* See a Sermon on this subject, by Mr Somerville of Jedburgh, in the Scotch Preacher.

this multitude to be ashamed of their guide, and of their cause; and to feel some misgivings of heart in executing their present commission, though they acted under what they might think lawful authority. Perhaps they were afraid of being consumed by fire from heaven, as the messengers were whom King Ahaziah sent to bring the Prophet Elijah to him°. Or more probably their consternation was owing to a miraculous exertion of Divine power accompanying our Saviour's words. However it be, this circumstance makes it evident, that JESUS could not be taken without his own consent; and that if he does not now or afterwards deliver himself from the hands of his enemies, it is not through want of power, but because he chooses, and is determined, at whatever expence to flesh and blood, to drink off the cup his Father had given him, and to fulfil the important ends of his mission.

HENCE he permitted these men who now lay prostrate on the ground, to recover themselves, and rise up; and he asked them a second time, *whom they sought?* and told them again that he was the person; but added, *If ye seek me, let these go their way,* pointing to his disciples; which he did for the

the more complete fulfilment of the saying he had used in his intercessory prayer to Almighty God, *Of them whom thou gavest me, have I lost none.* This good Shepherd was more solicitous about his disciples, than about himself. They were not yet qualified to encounter great trials in his cause; and it was necessary that they should be reserved for the work of planting his Gospel in the world, after his resurrection and ascension into heaven. The Blessed JESUS lost nothing of his usual presence of mind in this alarming situation. While he deliberately discovers and yields up himself to his enemies, he demands freedom for his apostles, which the armed troop had not power to refuse; wherein they, or their masters, certainly committed a great oversight, humanly speaking; since the taking of Him, while they let go his disciples, could never answer their design of suppressing his doctrine. But the wicked are often deceived and infatuated, when they think themselves most sure of compassing their ends^p,

THIS band of men, however, were more audacious and unrelenting, than the Officers sent by the Pharisees and Chief Priests on a former occasion, to apprehend JESUS^q. Un-

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^p Psal. vii. 14,—16.

^q John vii. 45.

moved either by his apparent innocence, or by their own recent experience of his power and greatness, they now proceeded to lay hands on him ; which his disciples perceiving, some of them asked him, whether they might employ, in his defence, the swords which they carried with them, according to the custom of travellers in that country, to ward off the assaults of robbers, or beasts of prey? And Peter, without waiting for orders, drew his sword, and aiming a blow at the head of one of them, a servant of the High Priest, named Malchus, (who seems to have been most forward in seizing JESUS), he cut off his right ear. A rash and imprudent action, which JESUS thus sharply and publicly reproveth: *Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword*^s. Peter was given to understand, that his present unallowed attempt would, if persisted in, bring deserved ruin on himself; and the same should sooner or later be the inevitable fate of all those who at any time had recourse to unjust violence: In which description, the Jewish rulers, and their abettors, were included, on account of the enterprize now carrying on by them against the Son of God. Nay, it comprehended likewise his own avowed friends and followers,

Luke xxii. 49.

^s Matth. xxvi. 52.

followers, even the most eminent of them, whenever they should, in the cause of religion, pursue the same measures. *All they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword.* He added, that if a defence had been fought for, it would not have been from the feeble arm of flesh^r. He would have prayed to his Father, and soon obtained succours from him, more than sufficient to resist all the forces of the world. But that was never desired or intended, being contrary to the will of God, and inconsistent with his great and holy designs long ago declared in the Oracles of the Prophets, respecting the salvation of men. And shall I, said he, decline to suffer what my Father hath appointed for me, in the prosecution of his designs? *The cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it^r?*

At the same time, he resolved to repair immediately the hurt done by his imprudent apostle; and asking a little liberty for that purpose from those who held him, he said, *Suffer ye thus far: And he touched the man's ear, and healed him^r.* This was a very wise and seasonable, though unexpected interposition, in order to secure his apostles from instant violence; and while it proclaims to all

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Matth. xxvi. 53.

^r John xviii. 11.^r Luke xxii. 51.

ages, how unwilling the LORD JESUS is that men should sustain any damage on his account, it exhibited such a demonstration of his power and goodness to those who were then present, as ought to have made them desist from their injurious attempts against his person.

ESPECIALLY when addressing himself to the multitude, and the Jewish part of them in particular, the Chief Priests and Elders, of whom some no doubt attended to see their orders put in execution, he expostulated with them in the following terms, so proper to shew them the iniquity of their proceedings, as well as the weakness and inefficacy of their malice, till the time came when he and his Father saw fit to permit the success of it. *Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves to apprehend me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me*". It was doubtless very humiliating to him, whose whole life had been so holy, useful, and beneficent, and who had hitherto sustained such an honourable character and office among men, to be sought out, and arrested in the night-time, like a common robber! He felt the vile indignity with conscious greatness, and did not forbear to express

express the generous emotion of his heart.— His crimes, such as they were, had been open and public; and the guardians of religion, and of their country, as his enemies pretended to be, had not wanted abundance of opportunities against him, more plausible than the present; yet they had never offered to take him prisoner before. They had no reason, however, to exult in their success. It was not their power by which he was overcome, but the will of his Father, to which he resigned himself.

THE armed band nevertheless persisted in their purpose; and, not contented with laying hold on JESUS, they bound him with a chain or cord, probably by the advice of Judas, or their own prudence, lest he should make his escape, as he had done on some former occasions, when threatened with danger or violence. He now made no resistance, but meekly suffered himself to be bound. Which when his disciples saw, they were all offended in him, extremely scandalized to behold their Master reduced to circumstances of weakness and dishonour, so unsuitable, in their opinion, to the character of the Messiah. This did for a time very much weaken their faith and their attachment to him, notwithstanding all that he had said to prevent it. In a word, they all forsook him, and fled*.

Only

* Mark xiv. 50.

Only Peter returned, and followed at some distance;—and after him another disciple¹, whom some take to be the Apostle John; others, one of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. There followed him also of his friends, a young man with a linen vesture cast about his body, as if he had been just risen from bed; who, when the guards attempted to lay hold on him, left his garment with them, and fled from them naked².

BUT JESUS they led away, bound like a slave and malefactor, to the house of Annas. And thus *He* was made a prisoner by sinful men, who came into this world to *proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound*³; to rescue mankind from the chains of ignorance and error, superstition, vice and guilt; and to establish them in the glorious liberty of the Children of God. What a return for his benevolence!—In reviewing this portion of our history, we are struck with the perfidy of Judas, concealed under tokens of friendship; an example which the enemies of JESUS, more especially in modern times, have not failed to imitate; among whom it is fashionable to speak of him and his doctrine in terms of affected respect, while at bottom they are labouring

¹ John xviii. 15.² Mark xiv. 51.³ Isa. lxi. 1.

labouring to subvert the faith of his divine mission. We see, in the case of Peter, the danger of an injudicious and intemperate zeal, though honestly intended; and that the Saviour of the world rejects the services of his warmest friends, when they presume to defend his cause by carnal weapons. In the whole transaction, who is there but must admire our Saviour's composure, firmness, and recollection of mind, amidst circumstances truly alarming; his meekness and forbearance towards his enemies; his provident care of his friends; and his perfect resignation to the will of his Father? It was an hour of much abasement to him, and of seeming triumph to his enemies, who gave melancholy proofs of their hardness of heart, and perseverance in iniquity, as far as they were permitted, against the clear conviction of their own minds. But it must be acknowledged, that in this first open engagement with the enemy, previous to his doleful passion, the light of the Blessed JESUS shines forth in obscurity; and that he appears with a dignity of mind, which outward ignominy cannot hide or impair.

SECT. III.

SECTION III.

JESUS accused, and condemned before the Jewish Council.

WE now proceed to our SAVIOUR's trial before the High Priest, and the Council assembled with him; a trial undoubtedly the most iniquitous and violent that ever was held upon injured innocence, and where some of the blackest passions incident to human nature operated strongly, and even carried all before them, under the solemn appearance, however, of law, of justice, and of religion. We here see that truth and righteousness have not a more dangerous and implacable enemy in this world, than false religion, or a zeal of God which is not according to knowledge. JESUS, as his office required of him, had always loudly condemned* superstition, hypocrisy, and priestly usurpation, in every shape and degree; and he was now, in his turn, condemned by them, and fell a sacrifice to them. Happy if even by his death, he could expel such evils from the world, or at least prevent the prevalence of them among his followers!

FROM

* See an excellent little Treatise on the life and death of JESUS CHRIST, by Dr Craig of Glasgow.

FROM the Gospel of St John ^a we learn, that they who apprehended JESUS, led him away first to the house of Annas. This man had been formerly High Priest, and was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who now held that office. But it is likely nothing remarkable was done at Annas's house; and JESUS seems to have been detained there only for some little time, till the Council was fully assembled, and prepared to sit in judgment on him, at the Palace of Caiaphas. Then he was brought thither, at a late hour of night (for they were resolved to lose no time), and presented before the High Priest, and the principal persons of his order, together with the Scribes and Doctors of the law, and the Elders of the people. All these were, and had long been his determined enemies; and they now gladly became his judges. As for Caiaphas, he had formerly declared his opinion in solemn council, that JESUS should be put to death ^b; alledging nothing in support of that judgment, but reasons of state, and a pretence of public good: And the whole body of the Priests, Elders and Scribes (all or mostly of the sect of the Pharisees) were filled with envy and malice towards him; because they saw that the credit and success of his doctrine, so opposite

^a John xviii. 13.^b Chap. xi. 47,—50.

sites to theirs, was daily gaining ground, and that unless a speedy stop were put to it, their authority would be annihilated. That a person no way connected with their party, and uninstructed in their schools, should seem to excel them in wisdom; and that one so mean in outward appearance, should claim, and be acknowledged by many to be the promised Messiah; these things filled them with indignation, and they were irritated and stung to the heart with those severe but just reproofs of their hypocrisy, and other vices, which had often come from his mouth. In such a disposition, it could not but give them a secret satisfaction to see JESUS brought before them as a prisoner: His destruction was already resolved on; and nothing more was wanted, but to justify it in the best manner they could by the form of a legal trial.

THE High Priest, as president of the council, began with interrogating JESUS about *his disciples, and his doctrine*^c; in hopes to draw something from his own mouth which might be improved against him, and that he might seem to be justly suspected both of teaching false doctrine, and of forming a dangerous faction in the state. But JESUS, conscious of his

^c John xviii. 19,—23.

his innocence, answered him with becoming prudence and freedom, 'that neither his doctrine nor his actions had ever dreaded the censure of the world: the most public and frequented places in Judea had been the ordinary scenes of his preaching: all men had been invited to hear him, and were now welcome, if they pleased, to come and testify against him. *I spake openly to the world, said he; I ever taught in the synagogues and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing* (inconsistent with my public instructions). *Why askest thou me? Ask them who heard me what I said unto them: behold they know what I said* *.' No answer could have been more just or proper. Had JESUS been ever so willing at this time, and before these Judges, to enter into a vindication of his doctrine and followers, it was obvious that his account of these matters would not have met with credit. The facts were to be ascertained

* It is said to have been the custom of the Jews, that when any one was punished for a capital crime, proclamation was made before the prisoner by the public crier, in these words: 'Whoever knows any thing of his innocence, let him come and declare it.' And it is the opinion of a learned commentator, that our Saviour referred to that custom in this place, and claimed the benefit of it; as did also St Paul in his defence before Festus. Acts xxvi, 4. 5. See Bp. Lowth on Isa. liii. 8.

tained by the testimony of witnesses: And had his Judges indeed gone so far against him without knowing any thing of his guilt? or, would they have him to become his own accuser? The putting of such questions was manifestly improper; and our Saviour's answer had a noble freedom in it, but nothing disrespectful to the Judge.

NEVERTHELESS, the text adds, that when JESUS had thus spoken, *one of the officers who stood by, struck him with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the High Priest so?—* A most unwarrantable action, and an outrage to the whole Court, no less than to the Person of JESUS, if we were to weigh it in the balance of ordinary justice, since the sufferer was under their immediate protection, and ought, till found guilty, to have been held as sacred and secure from personal abuse as the Judges themselves; yet we do not read that it met with any disapprobation from them. And without doubt it was a very provoking insult to our LORD, at the beginning of a trial for his life, to receive a blow with the hand in open court, by way of rebuke and chastisement, from a ruffian servant, who to the meanness of his birth and rank, added manners which were odious and contemptible. Who could have done such

a deed, but a man of the basest character? One of those low-minded, selfish, unfeeling wretches, whose hearts will not only allow, but prompt them to insult misfortune, and talk to the grief of the afflicted^d? One of those Shimeis^e, who will run foremost to trample upon those that fall, but are ever ready to bow and cringe to the nod of power; who omit no opportunity to flatter the great ones of the earth, and think every thing lawful which is likely to please them, or to promote their own interest?

How then does JESUS receive this outrage? Does he cause the hand that struck him to wither instantly, like Jeroboam's when he attempted to seize the Prophet of Bethel^f? Or does he smite the aggressor with an incurable leprosy, as Elisha did Gehazi for his avarice and falsehood^g? or as King Uzziah was smitten for invading the Priest's office^h? No, He does not. Such punishments, however merited, and in their own nature miraculous, would in this case have looked like the effects of anger and revenge; and he chose rather to appear weak, than to follow the suggestions of wrath, or misapply his divine power.—On the other hand, does

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^d Psal. lxi. 26. ^e 2 Sam. xvi. 11, 12. ^f 1 Kings xiii. 4.

^g 2 Kings v. 27. ^h 2 Chron. xxvi. 20.

he encourage unjust violence, and invite a second blow, by silently turning the other cheek to the smiter, according to the literal sense of his own precept¹?—By no means. So far from this, he remonstrates against iniquity, and says what might well have made the offender and the whole Court ashamed of the treatment now given him; but he does it without clamour, and with unruffled calmness and composure; *If I have spoken evil* (in any part of my life now under examination) *bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?*—This teaches us to suppress indecent sallies of passion even under the greatest provocations, and in meekness and patience to possess our souls; above all, to forbear revenge, and rather hazard a repetition of the wrong, than retaliate it; but that under these restrictions we may lawfully vindicate our rights, and take measures to bring the injurious person to a sense of his wrong. And this is doubtless the true import of the precept above mentioned.—But, to proceed,

DISAPPOINTED in the hope of making JESUS accuse himself, the Chief Priest and his associates were forced to have recourse to the testimony of others. And the Evangelist
Matthew

¹ Matth. v. 39.

Matthew informs us, that *the Chief Priest and Elders, and all the Council, sought false witnesses against Jesus, to put him to death*^k. Not that they now first began to look out for witnesses in this cause: they were too intent upon their work, to have neglected so necessary a precaution till now; the witnesses no doubt were provided before the Council met: But the meaning is, that *they sought false evidence*^{*} *against Jesus*; that is, they put such questions, and conducted the examination in such a manner, as to invite and encourage the witnesses to depose against JESUS, even at the expence of truth; and the witnesses were but too well inclined to gratify them. The whole Court endeavoured to lead the witnesses into that crime, from which it was their duty to preserve them with the utmost care, and for which, when discovered, the law decreed very severe punishment^l. All they aimed at, was to make the depositions turn out against JESUS, whether true or false, that they might have some pretext for finding him worthy of death.

SUCH being the disposition both of the judges and witnesses, it may well seem strange that they had so little success in procuring

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^k Matth. xxvi. 59.

^l Deut. xix. 17. &c.

^{*} *ψευδομαρτυριαν.*

the evidence wanted. Many witnesses indeed appeared, all of them specially chosen, or rather suborned by the prosecutors, and abundantly prepossessed against the accused person; and many calumnies, we may be sure, were vented against the Holy JESUS: yet nothing was found which could in any construction be thought to amount to a capital crime. Either the things alledged were frivolous and of no importance, or the witnesses, according to the common lot of falsehood, did not agree in their testimony.

At length however, to relieve in some measure the embarrassment of the Court, two witnesses came, who agreed in some circumstances, as it was thought, of a criminal tendency: But they are justly called *false witnesses*, because they ascribed words to our Saviour very different from what were really spoken by him, and they entirely misrepresented his meaning in the passage alluded to. They declared that he had said, *I am able to destroy this temple (viz. the temple of Jerusalem) and to build it in three days*. But JESUS had said, * *Destroy ye this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*^m, (meaning the temple of his body). The thing aimed at by this testimony,

^m John ii. 19.

* *Λυγατε.*

testimony, was to prove him an enemy to the Temple of God. But though his words had been exactly as they reported them, they fell far short of making good such a charge; since, according to the witnesses themselves, if he had threatened to destroy the temple, he had at the same time promised to build it again in three days. This, at the worst, could be regarded only as the ostentatious boast of a fool or a madman, not as inferring a capital crime. And therefore the Evangelist Mark observes, that *neither so did their witness agree together*ⁿ, or rather, was not equal* to the charge. It was consistent enough with itself; but after perverting our Saviour's meaning, and even falsely reporting his expressions, their evidence was by no means sufficient to be the foundation of a capital sentence.

FULLY sensible of this, the High Priest resolved to make another trial if he could bring JESUS to confess or say any thing which might be turned to his condemnation. Rising up therefore from his seat, and addressing himself to JESUS with an air of candour and impartiality, as if he invited an accused man to clear his innocence, *Have you nothing*, said

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ⁿ Mark xiv. 59.

* ουκ ιση η μαρτυρια.

he, to answer for yourself? Do you hear what these witnesses testify against you? But Jesus held his peace".—He declined to enter upon a vindication of his innocence, which was so clear in itself, and of which he knew that his judges themselves were secretly persuaded. For it had stood the test of the severest scrutiny, and remained hitherto unblemished, notwithstanding all the efforts of this unrighteous Court, and their corrupt witnesses, to fix some blot upon it. He also knew, that, before such judges, nothing could in the least avail for his defence. He therefore said nothing for himself, nor was he provoked to utter one expression of resentment and indignation against his judges or accusers. *He held his peace!*—A silence which in these circumstances we ought to venerate and admire as evincing our Saviour's continued prudence, composure and meekness; whilst at the same time it discovered in him a just sense of his own innocence and dignity, and imported a very expressive reproof of judges so manifestly actuated by prejudice and malice. An ancient Heathen Writer said, that the art of eloquence is taught by men; but that it is the Gods alone who inspire the wisdom of silence.

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° Matth. xxvi. 62. Mark xiv. 60.

OUR Saviour's silence on this occasion obliged the Council to come to a point, which by all appearance they would gladly have avoided ; and that was, to ask him in plain terms, whether he pretended to be the Messiah? That was a character they disdained to *even* him to ; and much rather wished, that laying it apart, something capitally criminal, or what the Roman Governor might deem such, had been confessed by our LORD himself, or proven against him by the testimony of witnesses. But Divine Providence was pleased to order it otherwise, that JESUS might have an opportunity of claiming the character of Messiah in the most public and solemn manner, and in the presence of those who were best disposed and qualified to contest that claim.

THE High Priest therefore first asked JESUS simply, *Art thou the Christ? Tell us*^p.—And JESUS no longer kept silence when they brought the affair to this issue ; for, as there is *a time to keep silence, there is also a time to speak*^q : And what he said was calculated at once to expose the incurable prejudice and partiality of his Judges, and to excite a due attention to this important question, before he should give a direct and explicit answer to

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^p Luke xxii. 67.

^q Eccl. iii. 7.

it. *He said unto them, If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I also ask you** (or endeavour by close and forcible arguments addressed to you in an interrogatory form, to extort conviction from you), *you will not answer me* (will not listen or yield to the clearest evidence), *nor let me go*. As if he had said, To what purpose should I answer your question? You will neither believe my simple declaration, nor yet be convinced by the most irrefragable proofs of it which can be offered. And though you were forced in secret to yield to those proofs, and had nothing to say against them, you would not own your conviction, and set me at liberty.—This was the truth of the matter. The question put, should have been resolved by themselves, from a careful review of his words and works. It could not be answered to the satisfaction of equitable judges any other way. They knew very well, that he had claimed to be the Messiah; and their asking him whether he was so or not, without attending to the proofs

* Luke xxii. 67, 68.

* Our Blessed Lord did often propose his arguments in the way of interrogation. Matth. xxi. 31. Luke x. 36. And this method, the most close and cogent way of reasoning, was used by the ancient Hebrews, as well as by the Greek and Roman Philosophers. Sometimes when our Saviour reasoned thus with the Jewish Rulers, they would not answer him. Luke xx. 7,—44. *Grotius*.

proofs of the fact, was manifestly with an insidious and hostile design.

AN answer however to this question was insisted for from his own mouth; and that they might not fail to obtain it, the High Priest put him upon oath to declare the truth, saying, *I adjure thee by the Living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?* To which JESUS, without hesitation, delivered an explicit answer in the following terms: *Thou hast said*, or as the Evangelist Mark expresses it, *I am*[†]. For he could not decline it now, without incurring the charge of impiety; because judges, by the law of Moses, had a right to use such adjurations[‡]; and he was far from desiring to decline it on so fit an occasion. Upon his solemn oath before the chief men of Judea, and in the immediate view of suffering a cruel death for it, he boldly professed himself to be the Messiah; and added the following words suitable to that high character: *Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven*[¶]. That is, ‘ Mean and contemptible as I now appear in your eyes, I tell you of a truth, that hereafter you shall have cause to be
‘ persuaded

[†] Mat. xxvi. 63. [‡] Mark xiv. 62. [¶] Lev. v. 1. [¶] Mat. xxvi. 64.

‘persuaded of my greatness and dignity :
‘Beside all the other evidences already exhibited during my humble ministry, you
‘shall have other proofs still more sensible
‘and affecting, that I am indeed the Messiah;
‘for this despised Son of Man will soon be
‘advanced, as foretold by the Prophet Daniel,
‘to celestial power and glory, and in that
‘state will come to punish the obstinate
‘enemies of truth and righteousness*.’ This answer argued not only a consciousness of innocence in him who gave it, but a sense of majesty and authority above all human power; and the truth of it was verified by the event. It was such as might well have staggered the Council in their present measures, if they had not been carried headlong by their passions. In the course of his ministry, JESUS had rarely owned himself in direct terms to be the Messiah, except to his disciples privately, and under a charge of secrecy. Such a confession publicly made, would have looked like ostentation; and considering the temper of the Jewish nation, so strongly prepossessed in favour of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, it would in all probability have been abused to very bad purposes. But now was come the proper time to avow that character openly, when it could
could

* Dan. vii. 13.

could be done without prejudice to others, and with the highest credit and dignity to our Saviour himself.

No sooner had JESUS confessed himself to be the Messiah, than *the High Priest rent his cloaths*^v, as if unable to bear the horrid insult now offered to Almighty God: *And what need*, cried he, *have we of witnesses? Ye have heard his blasphemy.* In which procedure doubtless we behold one of the greatest farces of hypocrisy that ever was acted. This devout Priest had expressed no concern to see a prisoner at the bar most injuriously treated by a servant of the Court; no uneasiness to hear witnesses swear falsely, and even to lead them into that crime; no reluctance to prosecute and condemn the guiltless, and to violate, in the prosecution, every law of justice and humanity. But he was forsooth overwhelmed with sorrow at a pretended blasphemy, which was the pure invention of his own passions and prejudices. Blasphemy indeed it would have been, if JESUS had not been truly the Messiah. But this was the very point in debate between him and his judges; and they, instead of examining the proofs of it, chose to take it for granted that he had assumed that high and sacred character falsely,

^v Matth. xxvi. 65, 66.

ly, and consequently had spoken blasphemy; so it was concluded by the President of the Court, and all the other Judges were of the same opinion, who being next asked by him, what punishment they thought the criminal deserved, did unanimously agree, that he ought to suffer death according to the law².

THIS sentence being immediately passed, the malice of the guards and attendants, hitherto under some restraint of decency, was forthwith let loose against the Blessed JESUS. He was now considered as a person accursed, out of the protection of the laws, and devoted to destruction; and therefore was treated by every one about him with boundless insolence and cruelty. They strove to outdo one another in expressing their contempt of him: And first they used the heinous indignity of spitting in his face; then, putting a cover on his eyes, some struck him with the palms of their hands, others beat him with their fists, and bade him exercise his prophetic gifts in telling who it was that struck him³. Nothing was omitted that could serve either to provoke or depress him; nor could any thing equal these barbarities, but the meekness and patience with which JESUS bore them. Moreover, all this seems to have been

² Lev. xxiv. 16.

³ Matth. xxvi. 67, 68.

been done in the presence, and with the approbation of the Council, or at least without any check from them.

AND such was the treatment the SON of GOD received from men by profession the zealous worshippers of his Father, the priests and ministers of his religion, and the elders of his people. Alas! how far were they degenerated! and how little did they know him whom they professed to adore! But it pleased God, in an instance so memorable as that now before us, to let their nakedness appear; for many wise reasons, and particularly for this, that we might see how little security there is for truth and innocence, under Judges who have a false shew of religion; and that the mask of piety is sometimes more odious than the avowed contempt of it. Libertines, it is true, are not without bigotry in their own way: They have often proved zealous persecutors, as appears from the conduct of the Sadducees (who undoubtedly belonged to this class) related in the Acts of the Apostles.—It is also remarked somewhere by the Jewish Historian Josephus, that those of this sect were commonly more severe and sanguinary in their punishments than other men. But what a deplorable case is it, when piety itself is prostituted to the service of envy
and

and malice; and when the most obvious and essential duties of religion, and of common justice, are violated, under an appearance of sanctity, and of zeal for the glory of God! Then truly the depravity of human nature seems to assume its most hideous and disgusting aspect. Be this as it will, our Blessed Saviour now received first in his own person, the treatment which his sincere servants have often met with since, partly from unprincipled politicians, and partly from fierce and infatuated bigots, more disposed to imitate his persecutors than himself, while they profess an uncommon zeal for his honour. He was condemned as a blasphemer, for professing the truth; and for the same reason, under the reproachful name of Heretics, have been frequently condemned, the most upright and diligent observers of his divine doctrine. If we indeed be his disciples, it will without doubt be our care to maintain inviolably the rules of equity, truth, and candour, in all our speeches and actions relating to any man with whom we have to do, especially any fellow christian; and if we act otherwise, it may be truly affirmed, that whatever our profession or belief be, we are as much the enemies of JESUS, as this Jewish Council which condemned him to death.

SECT. IV.

SECTION IV.

JESUS denied by Peter.

PETER's denial of his MASTER, which was repeated, at certain intervals, no less than three several times, happened during the course of our SAVIOUR's unrighteous trial before the Jewish Council: But, for distinctness sake, it is proper to relate it separately, as is done by three of the Evangelists. The circumstances of the trial already mentioned, formed a conflict for our Blessed LORD, which must be allowed sufficiently severe. But to the outrages he received from his enemies, there was added, in this sad hour, something still harder to bear, the cowardly desertion of a chosen friend.—It was not enough for the humiliation of our LORD, that one of his disciples had already betrayed and sold him. His sorrows were to be farther aggravated on this tender side, amidst the furious assaults of crafty and powerful foes, by seeing another friend, who had always been among his chief apostles, openly renounce him, and deny with oaths and imprecations, that he had any connection with him, or did so much as know him.

him.—‘Thou wast pleased, O God infinitely
 ‘wise! to give us in this instance, an affecting
 ‘example of human frailty; and to shew,
 ‘that humility, watchfulness, and prayer,
 ‘can never be safely laid aside or neglected,
 ‘even by the most eminent of thy servants
 ‘here below.’

It was formerly observed, that Peter seeing
 JESUS personally attached in the garden, and
 led away as a prisoner, at first betook himself
 to flight; but afterwards recovering from his
 panic, followed afar off unto the palace of the
 High Priest, where he was introduced by means
 of another disciple^a, who had got in before
 him, being known to the High Priest, and who
 is supposed to have been either the Apostle
 John, the relater of this passage, or else some
 inhabitant of Jerusalem that believed in
 CHRIST.

HERE Peter sat down in the lower part of
 the hall, among the servants and officers, at
 a fire they had kindled^b; but he little knew
 what a temptation was at hand to attack
 him, or into how shameful a prevarication
 he was soon to fall. At first a damsel came
 to him (the same that kept the door, and
 had admitted him into the hall), who, looking

^a John xviii. 16.

^b Matth. xxvi. 69.

ing stedfastly at him, and recollecting that she had seen him, *You are certainly*, said she to him, *one of the followers of this Jesus of Galilee*°. Peter denied before them all, and said, I am not;—an astonishing speech truly to come from one who had been so long the companion of JESUS, the witness of his words and works, and admitted to an intimacy and freedom with him above most other apostles! One who had seen his glory in the mount, and had been enabled by his power to walk upon the sea!—Yes, this was spoken by that disciple, who very lately appeared so firm and courageous in his attachment to JESUS, when once and again he solemnly protested to him, that he would die with him rather than deny him!—Good God! what weakness and inconstancy are the best of us liable to!—Nothing can be said to justify this conduct. Nevertheless, for alleviation, it may be considered, that the attack now made upon Peter was altogether sudden and unexpected, as well as alarming, and his guilt was not premeditated. He had come hither out of an affectionate concern for his Master, to see what would become of him, hoping to pass unobserved in the croud as an indifferent spectator. He did not think he was known to any person that would discover

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him,

° John xviii. 17.

him, and he was quite unprepared for the challenge now given him. The consequence was, that it surpris'd and shook him, and threw him into such confusion and terror, that, forgetting all his former resolutions, he thought only of consulting his present safety, at whatever expence it might be to truth and innocence.

NOR was this the worst of it; for, a little while after, at the first crowing of the cock, about the hour of midnight, Peter going out into the porch without the door of the palace, was met by another maid-servant, who, taking a narrow view of him, said to the standers by, *This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth*^d: Whereupon, it should seem, one of the men who were present, took up her words, and, addressing them to Peter directly and personally, said, *Thou art one of them*^e.—You would think that Peter might by this time have recollected himself, and gathered resolution enough to retract the falshood he had utter'd, and to give an honest testimony to the truth. But, alas! it is not so easy to recover one's self after having once gone astray. One sin naturally, and almost unavoidably, leads into another; and in such cases too, the principle of shame, which

^d Matth. xxvi. 71. Mark xiv. 69. ^e Luke xxii. 58.

which was before a guardian of our innocence, joins its forces to our enemy, and helps to bar the way against repentance. Peter repeated the same base denial over again, in a more positive manner, and with stronger asseverations than before. He now confirmed his lie with an oath^f.

To complete the disgrace of this timid Apostle, a third attack was made upon him some time after, by a relation of that Malchus whose ear Peter had cut off in the garden^g. He at least was foremost in it, though others may have joined with him, and supported the charge. This man confidently asserted, that Peter was a follower of JESUS; and confirmed his assertion by two arguments of great weight, first, that Peter's accent and tone of voice discovered him to be a Galilean^h; and next, that he himself had seen him with JESUS in the gardenⁱ. Thus pursued and hemmed in on every side, it was very hard for Peter to persist in his denial. Yet he resolved still to face it out, and he repeated his denial a third time, with more solemn oaths, and even with imprecations^k.—Such was his fall!

BUT, for the encouragement of humble penitents, he soon found the benefit of re-

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pentance,

^f Matth. xxvi. 72.

^g John xviii. 26.

^h Matth. xxvi. 73.

ⁱ John xviii. 26.

^k Matth. xxvi. 74.

pentance, and a happy recovery. Immediately after his third denial, he heard the crowing of the cock: It had crowed before at the time of his first or second denial¹; but had then escaped him, or made no impression on him. But this second crowing roused him as it were, from a profound sleep. For the most trifling occurrences are sufficient to alarm the conscience of a man on ill terms with himself; and he often derives a secret pain and horror from little circumstances which others do not observe, or observe without the least emotion. Peter's guilt is now suddenly presented before him, with all its aggravations: he recollects the prophetic saying of his Divine Master, and feels it carried home with a knell to his heart: *Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice*^m. To this was added, a look from Jesus himselfⁿ, who, by turning about in the place where he stood, could encounter Peter's eyes with his; and, with that look, Peter was wounded to the very soul. No wonder; for it was expressive of reproof and displeasure, but not without an encouraging mixture of tenderness and compassion, as if our Lord had said to him, 'Peter, Peter! Is not this what I forewarned you of? You have repeatedly denied me, but I will not even yet

¹ Mark xiv. 68.^m Verse 72.ⁿ Luke xxii. 61.

‘ yet disown you : repent speedily, and be
 ‘ restored to the number of my friends.’
 Upon this Peter, no longer able to contain
 himself, or to bear company, *went out and*
wept bitterly °.

FROM this example we may learn the danger of exposing ourselves to unnecessary temptation, from which we can never escape without sin; for it was no call of duty which brought Peter to the palace of the High Priest at this time, and he would have been much better employed exhorting and encouraging his affrighted companions. Hence also we ought to be convinced, as from experience, of the seasonableness and importance of those admonitions which CHRIST had previously given to his Apostles, to *watch and pray that they might not enter into temptation* ; and of the bad consequences of neglecting such precautions, and indulging a rash presumptuous self-confidence, for which Peter had been so remarkable in his late professions of attachment to his Master. It shews us likewise the evil of a passionate and intemperate zeal, since he who a little ago had drawn the sword in his Master’s defence, now denies him. A great and sudden transition ! but such as would

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very

° Matth. xxvi. 75.

very naturally succeed an irregular burst of zeal, which had more of pride and humour in it, than a generous love of truth. And if it be dangerous to mix christian zeal with human passions, it must be much more so to substitute the latter in place of the former; as hath too often happened among Christians, of whom many have persuaded themselves that they were defending the cause of CHRIST, while they were only gratifying their own anger, hatred, envy, covetousness, ambition, and the like vices.

BUT, not to enlarge on these particulars, I shall make only two further remarks on this passage. One is, That this speedy and ingenuous repentance of Peter, and these tears of compunction which he shed for his unworthy conduct, while they point out to sinners the course they should pursue in order to recover themselves from their lapses, and regain the favour of God, do speak more strongly for our Saviour's innocence, than the whole Jewish Council, Judges and witnesses together, could speak in proof of his guilt. For, if JESUS had been a deceiver, as they pretended, Peter must have known it; he could not be ignorant of it, having been so long engaged in the same designs: and if he knew JESUS to be a deceiver, why did he

he weep so bitterly for having denied him ? and why did a single look from JESUS, excite such galling reflections in his heart ? Associates in iniquity have no bond of union but self-interest and safety : when this tie is broken, they part for ever without remorse. And what regret can any one feel for deserting an impostor ? But Peter could not forgive himself for having denied JESUS CHRIST. The reason was, because he knew him to be true, and himself to be unfaithful and base.—The other reflection I would make, relates to the nobleness of our Saviour's behaviour on this affecting occasion. JESUS CHRIST is now surrounded by his implacable enemies, who state themselves his judges, to try him for his life. He is bound as a prisoner, interrogated, traduced, insulted, and ready to be condemned to death, under the execrable character of a blasphemer. Thus circumstanced, he has the additional affliction to find one of his chief and favourite Disciples acting a part repugnant to all his obligations, becoming a liar, and an apostate. He hears Peter assert three several times, and confirm his assertion with oaths and imprecations, that he is not a Disciple of CHRIST, and that he does not know the man. What a grief to the heart of this Divine Sufferer ! But, behold his fortitude and wisdom, and atten-

tion to the great ends of his mission, amidst so many pressing evils! Neither the malicious and artful proceedings of the Council, at whose bar he stands, the insolent abuse of their servants, nor the grievous and disgraceful offence of his friend Peter, are able to render him for a moment forgetful of what he owed to his own character and office, or inattentive to the recovery of this fallen disciple. *He turned, and looked upon Peter*; and by that striking look of awe and tenderness, he penetrated his heart with godly sorrow, and secured his fidelity ever after.

SECT. V.

SECTION V.

The Continuation of the Jewish Council, and the Remorse of Judas.

SO zealous were the Chief Priests and Elders to get JESUS put to death, that they seem to have sat up all night for that purpose, and never parted till they had carried him before the tribunal of Pilate^a. For the Council, of which they were members, was assembled and constituted, the prisoner produced, the accusation heard, witnesses examined, every part of the trial finished, and the sentence pronounced, all by the time the morning approached, or the day began to dawn, though it was probably late in the night before JESUS was apprehended. St Luke even seems to say that the morning was come^b, or at least that it was towards morning, before the examination of JESUS began. There appears to have been an uncommon precipitancy used in this business, just as it might be naturally expected from men hurried on by the most violent passions.

SOME indeed have supposed, that the Council, after passing sentence on JESUS as above related, broke up for some time, and retired,

Matth. xxvii. 1, 2.

^a Luke xxii. 66.

retired, and met together again in the morning. But it is more probable that they continued sitting after the morning was come. From the history of Peter's denial, it appears that JESUS was before them at the second crowing of the cock, that is, some time after three in the morning^e; and it is not likely that they would part only to reassemble so soon after, not to insist on the passage of St Luke above referred to. JESUS having received his sentence, and undergone those cruel insults which followed it, would no doubt be removed under guard to some other apartment; and in the mean time, the Council continued their meeting and deliberations.

BUT, what had they to deliberate upon now? And what remained for them to do, after finding JESUS worthy of death? Why, they had now the most important and difficult matter of all to discuss, without which every thing hitherto done would be in vain; and that was, how to get this sentence put in execution, as they had no legal power of themselves to execute it. To attempt to put JESUS to death by means of a popular tumult, was uncertain in its issue, and perhaps impossible. To compass it by private assassination, was more sure, but full of danger,

as well as infamy, to its authors. To get their sentence, therefore, confirmed by the Roman Procurator, who alone had the power of life and death at that time in Judea, seemed to be the most effectual method of accomplishing the favourite enterprise now in hand, and at the same time the most safe and honourable for them.—But, how should they be able to persuade this Magistrate, that JESUS deserved to suffer death? The testimony of their witnesses was altogether insufficient to prove the charge, even by their own confession; and as for the crime of blasphemy, on which their sentence was founded, they had reason to fear that it would make little impression on a Roman Judge; seeing those words of JESUS from which they inferred it, might very likely appear to him quite innocent and harmless. In short there was much cause to apprehend, that Pilate would not see the justice of their sentence, or be willing to ratify it; and therefore some other accusations were to be devised, with which they might load the prisoner before him. It was of the utmost importance to the success of their designs, that they should deliberate and settle among themselves, the plan of their future procedure in this affair (unless they had done it before), and contrive by what motives and arguments they might
most

most surely prevail with the Roman Governour to pass sentence against JESUS, according to their desire.

WHILE they were engaged in these deliberations, an object presented itself to them, which promised to shake the resolution of men but a little less determined than they were, and even to annul all their proceedings. That was the traitor Judas, now struck with remorse for what he had done, proclaiming aloud his own guilt, and his Master's innocence^d. This unhappy man had no sooner got over all the difficulties of his enterprise, and brought it to a successful issue, than he began to feel a bitterness springing from the thought of it, which he had never experienced before; and when he seemed ready to sit down quietly, and enjoy the fruits of his iniquity, he was from that moment deprived of all inward peace. Hitherto, in spite of many warnings, he had maintained an astonishing hardiness, and betrayed no sign of shame or fear; but *when he saw that Jesus was condemned*^e by the Jewish Council, and so inhumanely treated, his enraged conscience was let loose against him. Some sentiments of compassion might touch him; but his ingratitude and perfidy now appearing

^d Matth. xxvii. 3,—10.

^e Verse 3.

appearing in their true magnitude, filled his soul with unspeakable anguish and dismay. He could no longer restrain himself from making a public confession of his guilt, and restoring at the same time the fruits of it. In the presence of the Chief Priests and Elders assembled in Council, and holding out to them the thirty pieces of silver which were the price of his baseness, he said, *I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood*^f. —A striking testimony in favour of our LORD; and the more to be regarded, as it came from one who had every motive to suppress the truth, except remorse of conscience, which would not permit him so to do. This testimony did likewise carry in it the strongest remonstrance which either the wickedness or the virtue of man could offer against the present measures of the Jewish Rulers.

BUT they answer him with a supercilious and unfeeling contempt, and abandon him, without any relief on their part, to all the horrors of his own guilty mind. *What is that to us*, said they? *See thou to that*^g. They speak of it as a thing in which they had no concern, though in fact they were deeply involved in the same guilt: which must be imputed to their extreme hardness of heart, and

^f Matth. xxvii. 4.

^g Verse 4.

and their insensibility to every thing but the passions which did now actuate them. No sentiment of remorse is capable of touching their minds, though it had overcome the obstinacy of Judas : nothing can engage their attention, but what tends to further their design against the life of Jesus ; and his betrayer, after having effectually assisted them in that project, saw himself treated by them with the harshness and disdain which commonly falls to the lot of those who prostitute their consciences in order to please or serve the men of this world. They would not even grant him the consolation of receiving at his hands that detestable money, the hire of his perfidy, which he could not now endure the sight of : So that being determined to get rid of it at any rate, he thought proper to go and cast it down in the temple ^h. Nor did this just act of restitution appease his tortured mind. Unable to pardon himself, and meeting with no commiseration from the partners of his crime, he despaired of finding any in God himself ; and in this state of horror and distraction, he went and put an end to his wretched life with his own hands.

THE sacred historian immediately subjoins a fact closely connected with this, though it did

^h Matth. xxvii. 5.

did not happen till some weeks, or perhaps months after it ; which is, that the Jewish Priests, judging it unlawful to let the money restored by Judas be added to the sacred treasury, because it was *the price of blood*¹, or of a man's life, agreed to convert it to a more ignoble use, and purchased with it a burial-place for strangers, that is, men of other nations who happened to die at Jerusalem. This place, formerly called *the Potters-field*^k, because in it earthen-ware used to be made, received from the present transaction a new name, and was thenceforth called *The field of blood*^l:—a circumstance well known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and which served mightily to verify the fact above mentioned. He concludes this whole passage with observing, how exactly an ancient prophecy was fulfilled in it, which we now have recorded in Zech. xi. 12, 13.*

SUCH then was the melancholy fate of Judas Iscariot, an awful monument of the divine vengeance against ingratitude and treachery, and, we may add, against the immoderate love of this world, which was in him

¹ Matth. xxvii. 6.

^k Verse 7.

^l Verse 8.

* The text ascribes it to Jeremiah. But some think that word had crept into the text, by the mistake of a transcriber, instead of Zechariah ; others, that the six last chapters of Zechariah, were, in the Apostles time, understood to belong to Jeremiah.

him the source of these crimes ! His life seemed at first to throw a great stain on the name of Jesus ; which, in the end, however, it did completely wipe away, and even added new lustre to his spotless character.—Here is a testimony to our SAVIOUR's innocence, which can neither be refused nor evaded.—And, from this sad example, we should learn to dread the indulgence of any one irregular passion, as well as the love of money, since we know not into what crimes and miseries it may plunge us ;—to be particularly on our guard against the abuse of distinguished privileges, which, even Nature tells us, must be visited with severer punishment ;—and above all, to acknowledge the necessity of trust in God's mercy for pardon upon repentance, without which we can never repent truly and acceptably of any sin whatever. Had not Judas given up his hope in God, he might, like Peter, have been pardoned, and restored to favour. Excepting this, his repentance had every requisite qualification. It wanted neither sorrow, confession, nor restitution : nevertheless it did not avail him, because it was destitute of that sweet reviving view of the compassion and grace of God, which the greatest sinners ought never to lose sight of, and which is the only thing that can effectually bring back any erring mortal to him.

SECT. VI.

SECTION VI.

Our SAVIOUR's first appearance before Pilate.

AMONG other circumstances of our SAVIOUR's death and passion, it was foretold by him, that he should be delivered to the Gentiles^a, or uncircumcised Heathen, and suffer many things of them. We are now going to see the fulfilment of this prediction, in his trial before Pilate, the Roman Procurator of Judea.—The conduct of Providence is here remarkable. JESUS was brought before several different Tribunals, not as it commonly happens, in consequence of appeals taken by him from one to another, but purely by the management of his Judges; that while he experienced the injustice of the world in various forms, and in its bitterest effects, his innocence and dignity might be more apparent to all men: And as he was to be the Saviour of both Jews and Gentiles, it was proper that his cause should be examined by the one, as well as by the other.

THE Jewish Rulers, though justly apprehensive that their sentence against JESUS

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would

^a Matth. xx. 19.

would be regarded by Pilate as uninteresting or ill founded ; yet, from their knowledge of the temper and disposition of the man, they did not despair of being able to prevail on him to ratify it. Early in the morning^{*}, therefore^b, they carried JESUS away, bound, from the Palace of the High Priest, to the Judgement-Hall of the Roman Governour ; not waiting for the ordinary hour of hearing and deciding causes, lest any-thing should occur to prevent his giving judgement in this momentous affair before the Sabbath came on, which was the day following ; and by that, or some other means, their prey should escape from their hands. Here they acted very like those men whose feet are swift to shed blood^c, and who sleep not, except they have done mischief^d.

BUT while they were intent on these flagitious designs, they did not neglect the precautions of an abject superstition, or of a detestable hypocrisy. From a mistaken or pretended principle of religion, they refused to enter into the Prætorium, lest they should there contract some defilement which might disqualify them to eat of the Paschal Sacrifices ; but they had no fear of being stained with

^b John xviii. 28.^c Rom. iii. 15.^d Prov. iv. 16.^{*} It might now be about six, or a little after.

with innocent blood, and the blood of their Messiah. So, truly was it said of them by our LORD, that they *strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel* *. They sent JESUS into the Judgement-hall, attended by his guard; but they themselves remained without.

THE Governour, humouring their religious scruples, went out to them†. It is somewhat strange that he deigned to give them a hearing at so unreasonable an hour, especially as he was no stranger to the motives of their present conduct, and knew that envy was at the bottom of this prosecution.—These condescensions of the Judge would have been very laudable, and worthy of imitation, had they proceeded from a real love of justice and piety; but there is too much reason to suspect, that they flowed from a very different source, and were early proofs of that weakness and timidity which marked all the proceedings of Pilate in this affair. Conscious of the many malversations in his government, he was afraid to disoblige the principal men of the Jewish nation; and wished, if possible, to gratify them, without sacrificing the dignity and rights of his office, or seeming to abandon the cause of innocence.

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* Matth. xxiii. 24.

† John xviii. 29,—32.

HE went out to them, therefore, and began with asking them a very proper question, *What accusation bring ye against this man?* They answered, *If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.* By which it appeared how eager they were to have JESUS put to death, and at the same time how unwilling that their proceedings against him should be reviewed by Pilate; whom they wanted to make not so much the judge of the cause, as the executioner of their sentence already passed. He ought to take it for granted, that the accused person was worthy of death, merely because such respectable and holy men as they, had adjudged him to that punishment, without enquiring for any other proofs of his guilt. But whatever the Governour thought of this answer, it afforded him a fair pretence to decline intermeddling in so disagreeable a matter, and to rid himself at once of all farther trouble about it: For, he thereupon said to them, *Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.* Pilate, though obliged by his office to maintain justice and equity as far as he could among all persons subject to his jurisdiction, consented that JESUS, whether innocent or guilty, should suffer all the severities it was in their power to inflict. This offer they could not deny to be

be very favourable and indulgent to them; and yet it did not please, because it came not up to the extent of their malice against JESUS CHRIST. They sought to take away his life, and were very sensible that they had no regular authority which reached that length. *It is not lawful for us*, said they, *to put any man to death*; intimating, that the criminal now brought to his tribunal deserved to suffer death; and confessing themselves to be a conquered dependent people, who had lost the power of the sword in their own country; for, odious as the Roman power was to them in secret, they were ready to acknowledge and have recourse to it publicly, whenever it served their turn. Now this led to the fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecy, signifying that he should die by crucifixion, which was a Roman, not a Jewish punishment.

PILATE being thus unwillingly engaged to proceed to the trial, the question naturally returned, what particular crime they laid to the charge of a man whom they thought worthy of so severe a punishment? Then they began with these following accusations, equally bitter and unjust: *We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, that he himself is Christ, a King*.*

G 3

Strange!

* Luke xxiii. 2.

Strange! that they say not a word of any of the crimes so recently alledged against JESUS before the Jewish Council! Not one word of his destroying and rebuilding the temple, nor of his blasphemy, which had given such heinous offence! On these crimes alone, or one of them at least, the sentence of the Council was founded, which they now wanted the Chief Magistrate to confirm and execute: Nevertheless, before him, the state of the question is entirely changed, and a quite different charge produced. This conduct favours strongly of falsehood and unfair dealing, and even argues a consciousness in the prosecutors, of the injustice of their cause. In short, their present accusations were evidently contrived to make JESUS obnoxious, if possible, to the Roman Government, by representing him in the light of a State criminal, a turbulent seditious person, who went about sowing the seeds of rebellion in people's minds, and setting himself up for a King.

To such accusations, Pilate could not, consistently with his office, remain indifferent; and had they been well founded, JESUS was confessedly liable to severe punishment; but in fact they were absolutely false, or at best dark and ambiguous. The *first* charge,
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‘ of perverting the nation,’ might either mean that he was guilty of seducing men from the true worship of God, by teaching things contrary to his law, or of endeavouring to render the people disaffected to the Roman Government. The *second*, ‘ of forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar,’ was a gross calumny, of which the accusers themselves could not but know the falsehood. And the *last*, ‘ of making himself a King,’ though they wished to have it construed into a great crime, yet, so far as it had any truth in it, was quite inoffensive to all earthly rulers. JESUS had always used the most effectual precautions to prevent or discountenance every appearance of a disloyal and rebellious spirit among the Jewish people: He had commanded them to render unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar’s, and had withdrawn himself from them when at one time they would have forced him to assume the character of a temporal Prince^b.

PILATE, willing to enquire into the truth of the alledged crimes, thought fit to go in and interrogate JESUS himself upon them^c. He asked him, therefore, *Art thou the King of the Jews?* This seemed to him the most material article of accusation; and perhaps

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also

^b John vi. 15.^c Chap. xviii. 33,—38.

also the most curious, considering the appearance and circumstances of the prisoner. JESUS, with equal modesty and firmness, began his answer to the Governour, by asking him a previous question : *Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?* As if he had said, Have you found me affecting to be a King, from your own knowledge and experience ; or is it only a report which others have made to you concerning me ? The question was highly proper, in order to do justice to truth, and to prevent the Governour from being imposed on by the ambiguity of a word ; as also to prepare the way for a direct answer to his question. If Pilate had never known JESUS guilty of any-thing that favoured of criminal ambition, or of a design to usurp royal authority ; and if the charge ‘ of making himself a King,’ was only a suggestion of others, the fact might be true, and yet have nothing blameable in it, which was actually the case.

To the above question, then, Pilate replied hastily, yet with candour, *Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the Chief Priests, have delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done?* As much as to say, “ I know nothing of your case, but by information from others. The accusation brought against you
took

took its rise only among your own countrymen, of whom the leaders have delated you to me as a great malefactor, peculiarly hateful to them. What have you done to merit such resentment?"—This declaration gave our LORD a fair opportunity of speaking to Pilate's former question, and of asserting his title to royal dignity, as truth required, without giving unnecessary offence, which an absolute unqualified assertion of it might have done. "My kingdom, said he, is not of this world. If it were, I should have put arms into the hands of my followers, with orders to fight for me, and to defend me from the violence of the Jews. But nothing of this kind, you see, hath been attempted by me; and therefore you have reason to be satisfied of the truth of what I tell you, that my kingdom is not of a nature to give umbrage to the Roman Government, or to interfere with any of the kingdoms or states of this world."

UPON this, Pilate, not fully comprehending his meaning (for JESUS spoke of a kingdom which he had never heard of before), but perceiving, that weak and mean as he appeared to be in outward circumstances, he did not absolutely disclaim the title of King, said to him, *Art thou a King then?* It seems
you

you avow yourself to be a King.—JESUS answered without hesitation, ‘ It is as you say. I am a King, but such an one as is before described. The truth I ever will avow : It is the inheritance I was born to ; and to teach and confirm it, is the very end of my coming into the world. Such is my kingdom. I compel no man by violence and force of arms to become my subject ; but every one who loves truth, and desires to be guided by it, hearkens to my instructions, and yields me an unconstrained and willing obedience. *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice*’^k.

THUS did our LORD, in a situation the most depressed and alarming, with admirable firmness and recollection of mind, assert the real dignity of his character as a King, and the King of the Jews^l, agreeably to what had been ascribed to him by the Prophets of old, by the Eastern Sages at his birth, and by the joyful acclamations of the multitude on his late public entrance into Jerusalem : Yet with such prudent steps and preparations did he come to this assertion, as to avoid all offence and provocation by it, and

^k John xviii. 37.

^l Matth. xxvii. 11.

and even to satisfy Pilate of his innocence. And this is that *good* (or *noble*) *confession* which St Paul says JESUS *witnessed before Pontius Pilate* ^m;—a confession in which his followers should be zealous to imitate him, by doing justice to the truth in all circumstances, and at all hazards.

THE Governour ended this private examination of JESUS, with only asking him further, *What is Truth* ⁿ? To which, however, he did not wait for an answer; but, turning abruptly, and taking JESUS along with him, he went out to the Jews, and declared to them, *I find no fault in him at all*: “So far from deserving capital punishment, he seems to me not to have committed any thing blame-worthy.” Pilate, like the other politicians of this world, had no great desire to be informed what that Truth was which seemed of so much importance to JESUS, and for which he willingly exposed himself to such sufferings. It appeared no way interesting to him, since he saw that it did not immediately touch the peace and welfare of the commonwealth.

BUT the delegates of the Sanhedrim, grieved to hear JESUS receive from Pilate a testimony
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^m 1 Tim. vi. 13.

ⁿ John xviii. 38.

so unfavourable to their views, renewed their accusations in a more vehement and clamorous manner than before^o, and poured forth a torrent of calumnies against JESUS, hoping, ungrounded as they were, that some of them might make an impression to his disadvantage. In particular, they charged him (and this seems to have been the sum and drift of their accusations) with having attempted to raise popular commotions and tumults throughout the whole country; at least he had taught a doctrine likely to have that effect. *He stirreth up the people*, said they, *teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place^p*. JESUS, on the other hand, made no reply to any of their accusations; no, not even when called upon by the Governour to speak in his own behalf, who said to him, *Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee^q*? But he still maintained a profound silence;—a silence, however, more eloquent and instructing than any words. To what purpose should he speak? His past life confuted every accusation brought against him, and argued not only innocence, but incomparable merit and dignity. His Judge had just now given a public and disinterested suffrage in his favour. And his accusers, with all their vehemence

^o Matth. xxvii. 12. Mark xv. 3. Luke xxiii. 5.

^p Luke xxiii. 5. ^q Matth. xxvii. 12,—14.

mence and zeal, not daring to offer any proof of their allegations, shewed that they only thirsted for his blood. Silence in these circumstances, was truly great and heroic: it discovered a fortitude and self-command, a meekness and forbearance, a neglect of personal safety, and a contempt of danger, death and pain, all joined with conscious innocence, which, together, are very rarely if ever to be found among men. No wonder that Pilate marvelled at it, *marvelled greatly*: For he knew how eager men commonly are to speak in their own defence, even when they have done wrong; and if unjustly accused, how well they think themselves entitled not only to assert their innocence in strong terms, but to vent expressions of anger and indignation against their accusers. But that a man should calmly hear himself charged with high and capital crimes known by him to be altogether groundless, and incapable of being fairly proven, and yet not choose to say a word for repelling the charge, though legally invited thereto, this appeared to Pilate singular and astonishing; and we must suppose that he now concluded JESUS to be no ordinary person.

Now, therefore, he made another attempt to free himself from this odious trial, that
if

if he could not protect innocence, he might at least escape the guilt and infamy of condemning it, without losing the little popularity which was left him among the Jewish Rulers. For this he found a handle in the name of Galilee, which was then held to be the nursery of rebellion, and where JESUS was represented to have laid the first scene of his ambitious enterprises. Hearing of Galilee, Pilate asked, if the man were a Galilean[†]? and finding him to be so, he gladly laid hold on this pretence, to remit the cause to Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee, as belonging rather to his jurisdiction. And he was probably the more inclined to this measure, because he himself had been much blamed for his severity to the Galileans[‡]. The Tetrarch happened very opportunely to be now at Jerusalem, on account of the passover. Pilate therefore immediately sent JESUS, with his guards and accusers, to his tribunal.

BUT before we follow him thither, let us cast our eye back for a moment on this first appearance of his at the Judgement-hall of Pilate, and remark the conduct of the different persons concerned in that interesting scene.—And thus far the conduct of Pilate appears not highly culpable, or at least admits

[†] Luke xxiii. 5, 6, 7.

[‡] Luke xiii. 1.

mits of some excuse. It is true we are far from seeing in him the firm and magnanimous integrity of an upright Judge, who will lend no ear to malicious and ungrounded calumnies or accusations without proof; but will take oppressed innocence under his protection, and drive the oppressor from his tribunal; shewing himself superior to all considerations of interest, and even of peace and safety, whilst he follows invariably the dictates of an impartial justice. We see rather the mean and truckling weakness of a temporising politician, determined at all events to keep measures with the world, though not without some sentiments of honour and virtue. Pilate saw the righteous cause, and declared for it; but had not courage effectually to maintain it. His testimony to the innocence of JESUS, is the more valuable, that interest plainly led him to favour the other side, and that, in his ordinary conduct, as described by historians of undoubted credit, he was far from being scrupulous upon the point of right, whenever it came in competition either with his interest or his pleasures.

BUT, with all its imperfections, Pilate's behaviour on this occasion seems amiable when compared with that of the Chief Priests and Elders of the Jews. We are struck with
horror,

horror, to observe these pretended devotees affecting a concern for the honour of God, while they shew themselves void of all sentiments of candour and equity towards men; to see them shifting their ground, and varying their accusations, as they thought it might best suit their bloody purpose; studying only to mislead, and to inflame; now concealing their meaning under ambiguous expressions, and then not scrupling to advance things well known to themselves to be contrary to fact. Their capital charge against Jesus in this instance, was disaffection to the Roman Government; and yet his innocence of that crime, was in truth one great cause of their malicious prosecution. For, had he indeed lifted up the standard of rebellion, and undertaken to rescue them from the Roman yoke, there are many proofs both in our Gospels, and in their own Historians, that they would have been the first to range themselves under his banners; this being the very thing which they expected from their Messiah. But because JESUS discouraged these vain hopes, while he asserted himself to be the promised Messiah, therefore they could never forgive him; and in order to effectuate his destruction, they did not hesitate to accuse him falsely of that crime, which they would have applauded in him, if it had been well founded.

LASTLY,

LASTLY, if we contemplate the behaviour of JESUS during this part of his trial; keeping in our minds the sufferings he had already gone through, with those which he had still in prospect; it can hardly fail to increase our admiration of him. Here we have convincing proofs, that that remarkable silence which he maintained at different times before his accusers and judges, did not proceed from pride or fullness, but from a just sense of what became him in his present circumstances. For he did not refuse to speak on proper occasions. To the Roman Governour he so explained himself, as to satisfy him of his innocence; while under all the humiliation of unmerited disgrace, he truly asserted the dignity of his character and mission. But, painful as it is to a sensible mind, to hear itself loaded with the unjust imputation of enormous crimes, which are to be punished with nothing less than death and torture, he declined to enter into an unavailing altercation with his accusers, or even to say a single word in answer to men, who, as well as himself, were sufficiently convinced both of his innocence, and of their own baseness. In every situation, whether he speaks, or keeps silence, JESUS's conduct is great and exemplary, and altogether worthy of the Divine SAVIOUR of men. And from

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this

this example we should learn, not to be so zealous to justify ourselves as we often are; not to oppose even false aspersions with haste and passion; far less to set about the vindication of our characters, as it sometimes happens, before they are attacked. These things are attended with guilt, or betray a consciousness of it. Silence upon the subject of our own conduct, generally becomes us; and in every case, our actions ought to speak more loudly for us than our tongues.

SECT. VII.

SECTION VII.

JESUS brought before Herod.

THE characters and views of the several persons who were the immediate procurers of our SAVIOUR's last sufferings and death, were, though all of them extremely bad, yet widely different from one another, and furnish us with a short, but exact specimen of the various enemies of his religion in all ages; who are either such as make false pretences to piety, or openly despise it, or have at least some dearer interest which they prefer before it. At the tribunal of the High Priest, JESUS endured the unrelenting severity of a superstitious and hypocritical zeal, and of spiritual pride and tyranny, which cannot brook any opposition to its usurped authority in religious matters. Before Pilate, he saw his righteous cause sacrificed to the mean arts of an interested policy, or what the Apostle calls *fleshly wisdom*^a, which often loves to be on good terms with religion, but only that it may the better compass its own sinister ends. But when subjected to the judgement and cognisance of Herod, he had to encounter the insolence of a profane and

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libertine

^a 2 Cor. i. 12.

libertine spirit, which treats all religion with scorn and derision. Against all these different kinds of impiety JESUS had ever born a faithful testimony, both by his doctrine and his manners; and all of them now united their efforts to aggravate his sufferings, and accomplish his destruction. Never in any instance did that enmity more remarkably appear, which, upon the introduction of sin into the world, God put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent^b.

HEROD was at first mightily pleased with this unexpected incident^c. It flattered his vanity, because he considered it as a great honour done him by the Roman Governour; and it gratified his curiosity, by presenting him with what he had long wished for, a personal interview with a man, of whose wisdom and sanctity, and prophetic character, and mighty works, he had often heard. What had particularly attracted his attention, was the fame of our SAVIOUR's miracles; and he hoped that the time was now come, when he should have the pleasure of feasting his eyes with the exhibition of some of these supernatural works. Ignorant and foolish man! to imagine that the extraordinary operations
of

^b Gen. iii. 15.

^c Luke xxiii. 8.

of Divine Power were intended for the mere sport and pastime of idleness; and that the messengers of Heaven, amidst all the oppressions of this world, should be ever ready at a call to minister to its unreasonable pleasures, and to nourish its impenitence! or even that they would consent, for any consideration, to such an abuse! Had Herod seriously desired to be acquainted with the life and doctrine of JESUS CHRIST, to learn from him the way of salvation, or to examine impartially his pretensions to the character of Messiah, opportunities were not wanting to him in abundance before now, to gain satisfaction; his dominions having been the principal scene of our SAVIOUR's ministry. But this wicked Prince had given himself no concern about these matters voluntarily, unless perhaps to discredit and deride them. And now when JESUS is arraigned before him as a criminal, far from being solicitous about the merits of the cause, and the protection of innocence, he seeks only to gratify an idle or malicious curiosity, and hopes to be entertained with the performance of a miracle.

OBSERVE, this was that Herod who had seduced and carried off Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, and his own niece^d; and

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^d Matth. xiv. 1,—12.

to make way for a marriage with her, had divorced his former and only lawful wife, the daughter of Aretas king of Arabia. It was he who had cast John the Baptist into prison, for honestly remonstrating against his vices; and afterwards beheaded him there, in a season of mirth and festivity, though he could not but revere his virtues. In vain did the conscience of this profligate man, at times alarm and disturb him. He got the better of every transient fit of remorse, by abandoning himself to those sensual pleasures which benumb our moral faculties, and *take away the heart*^e. This was he whose office now called him, by a wonderful concurrence of circumstances, to sit in judgement on the SON of GOD; and who, instead of doing him justice, thought only of getting some amusement from the exercise of his miraculous power.

HE accosts him, therefore, and puts many questions to him; but JESUS intended no words, much less miracles, for him:—*He answered him nothing*^f. It was his maxim never to satisfy curious and impertinent queries, even when they came from his own disciples; and to use that condescension towards a worthless and hardened libertine, especially

^e Hof. iv. 11.^f Luke xxiii. 9,—12.

especially in the present circumstances, would have been still more improper. It might be difficult to refrain from upbraiding him with the many atrocious crimes which he had perpetrated, and had not repented of. But this was an occasion on which JESUS resolved to *keep his mouth with a bridle*^a. *He was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs*^b. *He was dumb with silence, and held his peace even from good*^c.—Better it was to let impiety go on and perish in its own way, than exasperate it by a vain remonstrance, which would have been imputed to anger and impatience. At the same time it was by no means to be flattered and gratified in its foolish and wicked expectations; but rather disappointed and mortified, for the honour of truth. For such reasons as these probably, JESUS at this time, though under great provocations to speak, observed a profound and unconquerable silence, equally regardless of the conclusions which Herod might draw from it, and of the consequences it might have with respect to himself.

NOR did he think fit to say any thing in answer to the accusations here urged against him with so much zeal and bitterness by the Chief Priests and Scribes. These accusations

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were

^a Psal. xxxix. 1.

^b Psal. xxxviii. 14.

^c Psal. xxxix. 2.

were doubtless of the same import with those already advanced before Pilate, consisting at best of mere confident assertions, without proof, and of which his past life was a sufficient confutation. Before impartial judges, no words were needed to vindicate him; and before his present judges, no words would have availed. Nevertheless the accusers could not prevail on Herod to confirm their sentence against JESUS, whose character and pretensions appeared to him a fitter subject of ridicule and contempt, than of serious and severe animadversion. Finding his pride mortified by our Saviour's silence, and his curiosity disappointed, he, without farther enquiry, descended from the dignity of the Judge, to the scurrility of the buffoon, and thought it not unworthy of him to treat the afflicted prisoner with indecent merriment and derision;—an inhumanity in which his courtiers and attendants, as it is usual, readily followed his example. No respect is paid to innocence and piety. The Holy JESUS is now again exercised with that trial which the Psalmist felt so bitter, to be made the scorn of fools^k. And after they had exhausted on him all the insolences of the tongue which they could think of, he is, by Herod's order, dressed in an old robe of majesty,

^k Psal. xlv. 13.—xxxix. 8.

majesty, as a mock king, and in that plight sent back to Pilate to do with him as he pleased. Now, these passages, the sacred historian adds, procured a reconciliation between Pilate and Herod, who before were at variance with one another, and served to restore one of those friendships which are regulated only by the pleasures or interests, or policy of this world; such friendships as often take place betwixt very bad men, who, whatever contempt or dislike they may have to one another, are ready enough to combine together against piety and virtue.

BUT to the well-disposed christian, this history may yield more substantial benefit, by shewing him, in the example of Herod, the fatal progress of vice, and particularly of sensual lusts, which gradually hardened the heart of this unhappy man, suppressed the reproofs of his conscience¹, took away all his reverence for religion and virtue, and led him on from one crime to another, till he was irrecoverably lost;—a loud warning certainly to guard against fleshly lusts, and the first entrance of sin! It shews also the treatment which real piety and purity of manners must expect to meet with from the licentious and profane. Herod, with his
men

¹ Mark vi. 19, 20.

men of war, would no doubt, like other libertines, exult in the conceit of their superior wisdom, while they set at nought the LORD JESUS, and mocked him ; but in fact they only exposed their own folly and injustice, as well as impiety. How vain is the pretence of those unbelievers *, who have alledged, that if the weapon of ridicule had been employed against the christian religion in early times, instead of the sword of the magistrate, it would have proved fatal to our faith ? For, has not this weapon been diligently employed by adversaries from the beginning ? Nay, what adversary hath ever omitted to employ it, according to his ability ? And do we not see the same in our days ? This is a kind of persecution which hath never ceased in any age or country, and probably never will. But we must not be deterred from the way of righteousness by the scoffs and sneers of profane men. If we have not learned to suffer reproach in the cause of truth and virtue, we are but little seasoned with the discipline of CHRIST. He experienced, before us, the most cruel mockings, and bore them with unshaken fortitude and meekness. No provocation could make him forget, for a moment, the dignity of his character, and the design of his mission ;
which

* See Lord Shaftesbury's Letter on Enthusiasm, § 3.

which was not to humour the passions of tyrants and libertines, but to promote the salvation of humble penitents. In his silence before Herod, our Saviour imitated the general conduct of Providence towards obstinate sinners, who, having long slighted and abused the means of salvation which God thought proper to afford them, are at length, by an awful, but righteous judgement, left destitute of all divine help, and delivered up, without resource, to the consequences of their own ways. *For unto every one that bath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that bath not, shall be taken away even that which he bath* ^m.

SECT. VIII.

^m Matth. xxv. 29.

SECTION VIII.

JESUS's last appearance before Pilate.

THIS Section presents us with a variety of instructing incidents, which I shall endeavour to mark in their order, but without enlarging on them, as they exhibit only a farther display of the same characters which have been already offered to our view.

PILATE seeing himself disappointed in his hope of getting rid of a cause so perplexing to him, by remitting it to Herod, became more convinced than ever of JESUS's innocence, and more averse to condemn him to death. Contriving, therefore, how he might save him, he first of all endeavoured to persuade the Jewish Rulers, and people, that they ought to be content at least with some slighter punishment*.—For, that JESUS had not been guilty of the crimes laid to his charge, he said, was manifest both from his former examination of him in their presence, and from the testimony of Herod, a prince of their own nation and religion, and a more competent judge of their quarrels than himself, who at most had thought him only worthy
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* Luke xxiii. 13,—16.

of contempt, but had pronounced no sentence against him: 'I will therefore, concluded he, chastise him (*viz.* by scourging), and release him.' A scandalous and mean proposal, utterly unworthy of an impartial judge! Pilate declares himself willing to violate the laws, in compliance with blind rage, and unreasonable prejudice; and consents to inflict a very severe punishment, where he knew, and confessed, that none was due.

It was easy to see, that so ignominious a concession would not mitigate, but rather increase the insolence of the Jews. Whereupon Pilate had recourse to another, and a more promising expedient, to get JESUS dismissed, perhaps without any punishment; which was to avail himself of the popular custom of releasing some one malefactor at the feast of the passover, according to the inclinations of the common people; an indulgence well-suited to a time of universal joy and festivity, whensoever the custom began, or whatever it arose from. The people therefore flocking round the Governor's tribunal, which stood in the open air^a, now began to insist upon their privilege, and loudly urged him to grant them the usual favour^b. This seemed very favourable

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^a John xix. 13.^b Mark xv. 8.

to Pilate's views: He signified that he was extremely disposed to gratify them, and would propose two persons to their choice, Barabbas, and Jesus; the former a notorious malefactor, convicted of sedition, robbery, and murder; and the latter only accused of pretending to be the King of the Jews, but not proven guilty of any crime. By this means he hoped to get Jesus set at liberty; for he thought it was not to be supposed but that a generous and religious people would incline to prefer innocence, when put in competition with such heinous guilt. *Whom will ye that I release unto you, said he, Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called CHRIST^c.*

WHILST this affair was in agitation, there came a message to Pilate from his wife^d, earnestly entreating him not to do anything whatever against the person now accused before him by the Jews; for, she had that morning had a dream, in which her thoughts had been exceedingly troubled with the apprehension of calamities likely to befall him and his family, if he should condemn that innocent and holy man.

THIS was not one of those common dreams which Solomon says *come through the multitude of*

^c Matth. xxviii. 17.

^d Verse 19.

of business^d, or which arise from thoughts with which the mind was previously and deeply occupied while awake. If Pilate's wife had formerly heard of our SAVIOUR's character and works, it does not appear that she could, at the time of her dream, or before it, have any knowledge of his being prosecuted by the Jews, since JESUS was not taken into custody till late in the preceding night (possibly after she had gone to rest), and was carried to Pilate early in the morning, she being still in bed: nor had she yet seen her husband this day, otherwise it is probable she would not have needed to send him such a message in public. A dream so much out of the train of her ordinary ideas, so awful in its circumstances, so strong in its impression, and so just and holy in its design, is most reasonably to be ascribed to a Divine impulse, like those supernatural intimations sometimes given of old in this way even to heathen people, and to persons not always the best among them; as to Abimelech king of Gerar^e, to Joseph's fellow-prisoners^f, to Pharaoh^g, Nebuchadnezzar^h, and others.—One of the ordinary methods by which God, in the more early ages of the world, used to communicate his gracious messages to men, was

^d Eccl. v. 3. ^e Gen. xx. 3. ^f Chap. xl. ^g Chap. xli.

^h Dan. ii.

was by dreams, as we read in Job xxxiii. 14, —17. And at all times, when men's dreams tend to withhold them or their friends from sin, as in this case, or to apprise them of any unexpected danger, may they not be justly regarded as warnings from Heaven? Certainly, however, this dream affords a remarkable testimony to our SAVIOUR's innocence during his trial: It was delivered publicly, and deserved the serious attention of all who heard it, but especially of Pilate. Nor was it altogether without effect; for it may be well supposed to have concurred with other circumstances in producing the extreme reluctance which the Governour shewed to pass sentence against JESUS, notwithstanding the clamorous demands of the Jewish Rulers and multitude; and in making him solemnly pronounce JESUS a just man, of whose blood he desired to be acquitted, even when he condemned him to crucifixion.

By this time the people had taken their resolution with regard to the choice before referred to them by Pilate; and had determined, quite contrary to his expectation, to ask the release of Barabbas, and the crucifixion of JESUS. Which may seem very strange, when we consider that this same people

¹ Matth. xxvii. 20,—23.

people had but a few days before expressed their belief in JESUS as their Messiah, and welcomed him into Jerusalem with loud acclamations and praises. — Whence this great and sudden change? The populace, it is true, are often fickle and inconstant, and apt to run from one extreme to another: they are also much under the influence of those whom they have been accustomed to respect: And the text expressly bears, that the choice we are now speaking of, was made at the instigation of the Chief Priests and Elders. But still we wonder how the current of their sentiments could be so easily turned into a quite contrary direction. The case seems to have been this. Whatever honours and praises the Jewish people had bestowed on JESUS, they proceeded always on the supposition that he would one day assume the character of an earthly Prince, and accomplish a temporal deliverance for them. But, now, when these hopes entirely forsook them, and they saw their supposed Deliverer condemned and insulted like the most despicable and helpless of mankind, their applauses were suddenly changed into secret disgust and aversion, and they became ready to hearken to the bloodiest counsels against him which the Chief Priests and Elders could suggest. Thus they were variable

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able and inconstant in their conduct towards him, but true to their own evil passions and prejudices. *Which of the two will ye that I release unto you?* demanded the Governour. *They said, Barabbas^k.*

PILATE could not help expressing his astonishment at their choice. Release Barabbas ! And *what then*, said he, *would ye have me to do with JESUS, who passes with many for the CHRIST, and commonly bears that name^l?* This was a matter truly deserving their most cool and serious consideration ; but, without hesitating a moment, they all cried, *Let him be crucified !* Not only pronouncing the sentence of death on him, but a death the most ignominious and cruel, utterly unknown to their laws, and by the Romans inflicted on none but slaves. The Governour still remonstrated : *Why, what evil hath he done^m?* “ Shall I condemn an innocent man, of free condition, to be crucified ? ” But this remonstrance only made them more fierce and clamorous in their demand of crucifixion.

SUCH then was the judgement of the Jewish people, headed by their rulers, on this memorable occasion. *They denied the Holy One,*

^k Matth. xxvii. 21.^l Verse 22.^m Verse 23.

*One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted to them*ⁿ. JESUS now suffered the disgrace to see himself put on a level with a malefactor of the worst kind, and rejected in comparison with that malefactor. ‘O infatuated and unhappy people! Where was
‘ now your reverence for piety and virtue?
‘ Where was your justice toward innocence?
‘ And where was your gratitude, not merely
‘ for all the pains that JESUS had taken to
‘ instruct and reclaim you, but for what
‘ would touch you more, the many temporal
‘ benefits which you or yours had received
‘ through his miraculous power? Often were
‘ you struck, at former times, with the wisdom and authority of his discourses, and
‘ the irresistible conviction of his replies:
‘ you were often forced to acknowledge the
‘ hand of GOD in his mighty works, and
‘ always to admit the unspotted innocence
‘ and holiness of his life: But, here, every
‘ sentiment of gratitude, justice, and religion, seems to have forsaken you.’—Our Blessed SAVIOUR made no complaint at this humiliating outrage; but who can think of it without indignation? And yet what better do we professing Christians do, when we sacrifice the honour and interest of our Divine Master, together with all our hopes

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of

ⁿ Acts iii. 14.

of salvation by him, to the indulgence of any criminal passion? What is this but preferring a murderer to the Holy One and the Just?—But let us proceed.

PILATE, finding from repeated trials, that all arguments and expostulations in behalf of JESUS were vain, and served rather to increase the madness of the people, seems to have thought it advisable to yield a little to the torrent, but did not yet abandon his design of saving JESUS from death. He therefore gave orders, that JESUS should be scourged^o; vainly imagining that by this punishment the rage of the Jews would be appeased: at the same time, this was a punishment which always preceded crucifixion, according to the custom of the Romans. At the Governour's order, the soldiers rudely lay hands on the person of JESUS, strip off his cloaths, tie him to a stake, and execute their dreadful office, as we may be assured, with unrelenting severity; for, not satisfied with the stripes they had given him, they super-added, by their own contrivance, many marks of wanton and unnecessary cruelty. Conducting him from the stake into the common-hall, the whole band assembled around him; not to ease the smart of his wounds, but to insult and deride him as a mock king^p.

Here

^o John xix. 1.

^p Matth. xxviii. 27.

Here they dress him in a purple robe^a, put a crown of thorns on his head, and a reed in his hand for a sceptre, and, bowing the knee before him, say, *Hail, King of the Jews*!—It may be considered by the bye, whether these men were not as skilful in the work of raillery and ridicule, as the wittiest of our modern infidels.—Then, to show, if possible, still greater contempt for the royal authority of JESUS, the soldiers spit upon him^b, smite him with their hands^c, and, taking the reed they had given him, strike him on the head with it^d. To such lengths of barbarous insolence did they proceed, of their own accord, not being restrained by the Governour. And all these indignities, inflicted on him for owning himself the Messiah, JESUS endured with silence and submission; to teach his followers not to be deterred, by the cruelest contempt they can suffer, from bearing testimony to the truth.

PILATE himself was moved at the sight of so much unmerited affliction, and he thought it could not fail to disarm the resentment of the Jews. With this view he again went out of the Hall to them^e, and told them he

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was

^a John xix. 2, 3.

^b Matth. xxvii. 29.

^c Verse 30.

^d John xix. 3.

^e Matth. xxvii. 30.

^f John xix. 4, — 16.

was now going to bring forth their prisoner to them, that they might see what a spectacle of misery he had allowed him to be made; not from any conviction of his guilt, for he found no fault in him, but merely to gratify them. He could not forbear repeating his testimony to our Saviour's innocence, though it necessarily implied a confession of his own meanness and injustice as a judge. Then, in the public view of the whole multitude, came JESUS forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, his face being probably soiled with his own blood; and Pilate pointing to him, said to the people, *Behold the man*^x!—This was a forcible appeal to their compassion, in favour of JESUS; and the Governour expected, at this sight, to hear them cry out—*It is enough—It is too much—Let him be dismissed—Save his life!* or something of the like import. In fact, the Chief Priests seem to have been apprehensive of some such turn in the people's minds; to prevent which, laying aside every shadow of decorum, together with common humanity, they laboured to foment the popular fury, and began a tumultuous cry, which was seconded by their servants, followed by others, and opposed by none, *Crucify him, Crucify him*^y!—Pilate, full of indignation, bade them take him themselves,

^x John xix. 5.^y Verse 6.

selves, and crucify him at their own peril, if they would: For his part he should never consent to so great an iniquity; and he had already gone farther, in compliance with their humours, than he ought to have done, being persuaded that the man was innocent, and deserved no punishment at all.

THIS answer dashed in some degree the boldness of the Jewish leaders, and made them desist from the method of clamour and tumult. They again condescended to reason calmly with the Governour, saying, *We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God²*. Their plea was to this effect, that if Pilate would govern them equitably according to their own laws, as he was bound to do, he ought to inflict on JESUS a capital punishment of the severest kind, because their law required the same. It is remarkable, that, at this tribunal, they had hitherto confined their charge only to crimes against the tranquillity and safety of the Roman State: But these not availing, because the Governour saw no proof of them, and was convinced of their falsehood; they now, as in the last extremity, fly to another accusation, founded on their law, meaning that which condemned blasphemers and false

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prophets.

² John xix. 7.

prophets^a. Yet here they could hope to prevail only through the ignorance of the judge, and his unskilfulness in the meaning of Hebrew phrases, of which they were not unwilling to take advantage; for JESUS's pretending to be *the Son of God*, was really no more than what he had already confessed to Pilate^b, without giving him any offence, when he avowed himself to be *the King of the Jews*. Nor could they be ignorant of this; but their aim was to impose on the Governour, with the pretence of a new and different accusation.

PILATE might very properly have declined to judge of matters relating purely to their law, as the Proconsul of Achaia afterwards did in a like case^c; but he had neither the prudence nor equity of Gallio, and it is evident his mind was now discomposed. Hearing of a claim made by this prisoner, which appeared to him singular and extraordinary, though at bottom the same that he had heard before, he was seized with dread and anxiety^d, and conceived himself to be involved in great danger, whatever course he should hold. The whole of his past conduct in this affair, had been marked with reluctance

^a Deut. xviii. 20. Levit. xxiv. 16.

^c Acts xviii. 15.

^b See John i. 42.

^d John xix. 8.

tance and irresolution, which many circumstances concurred to produce. But now he was *more afraid* than ever, lest, as some think, by giving sentence against JESUS, he should condemn a man of heavenly extraction, descended, according to his notions, from one of the Immortal Gods, and thus draw down upon himself the vengeance of Heaven ; or rather, as others understand it, he was the more afraid of a sedition, from the known obstinacy of the Jews in every thing that concerned their religion. Whatever else he feared, we may be sure his conscience did not leave him quite calm and easy, in the thought of condemning an innocent man to a cruel and infamous death. JESUS then being brought back into the judgement-hall, Pilate again went in there, to interrogate him upon this new charge, and to know the truth of it from his own mouth ; for he had no doubt of his veracity, and at any rate he saw it was in vain to look for proofs from his accusers. He asked him therefore, *Whence art thou?* of what family and extraction?—*But Jesus gave him no answer*°. It was not now a time to explain to a stranger, the peculiar titles and dignities of the Messiah promised to the Jews, nor would it serve any valuable end ; especially
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° John xix. 9.

to a Judge who was determined in the last resort to consult nothing but his own political interest, and who but a moment before had subjected to very cruel punishment, a man whom he knew and confessed to be innocent. Pilate was already satisfied, from a former conversation with JESUS, of the harmlessness of his pretensions: What need of more words upon that subject now?

NEVERTHELESS, this silence of JESUS gave Pilate no small offence, insomuch that he thought fit to remind him of his present condition, and that his life or death depended upon him. *Speakest thou not unto me?* says he. *Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?* It was really a vain boast of power, which served only to aggravate his guilt, since he had not the courage or virtue to employ it according to justice. Here JESUS broke silence, not to upbraid the Governour with his weakness, as he might justly have done, or to plead in his own defence, or to furnish his Judge with an answer to the present accusation of the Jews; but to express his acquiescence in the supreme disposals of Heaven, whatever he might suffer from the various crimes of men. *Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee*

^s John xix. 10.

thee from above : therefore he that delivered me unto thee, hath the greater sin^s. As if he had said, " Your power over me is neither more nor less than what God permits ; to whose will I yield a ready and unreserved submission. By his sovereign councils are these calamities permitted to fall on me, and for great and wise reasons, though the actors in them are not therefore less criminal ; but I admit that your share of the guilt is much smaller than that of my accusers."

PILATE was struck with the meekness, candour, and majesty of this reply, and wondered most of all that it expressed no desire of being delivered even from the death of the cross, while it strongly argued the conscious innocence and dignity of the Sufferer. But the more unconcerned about his fate that JESUS appeared to be, Pilate became the more solicitous to procure his release^a ; and again consulted with himself more anxiously than ever, how this end could possibly be accomplished, without hurting the interests of his ambition, or incurring the resentment of the Jews. For it was this that occasioned all his embarrassment ; and setting this aside, the path of duty which lay before him, had neither obscurity nor difficulty in it. What schemes he devised
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^s John xix. 11.

^a Verse 12.

for bringing about his purpose, or what new proposals he made to the Jews, our history does not mention. But whatever these were, the Jewish Priests soon disconcerted his counsels, and put an end to all further attempts in favour of JESUS, by crying out, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a King, speaketh against Caesar.*—Here they return once more to the charge of disloyalty and rebellion formerly urged by them against JESUS; and they in effect threaten, that if he should be released, they would have Pilate himself impeached before the Roman Emperor, as an abettor of Rebels, and an enemy to his Prince.—Pilate knew how groundless such accusations were in the present case; but, knowing at the same time the jealous and arbitrary temper of his master Tiberius, and reflecting on the power of calumny, he perceived that these matters might easily be so represented to him as to make the most dangerous impressions on his mind, especially when joined with many other acts of tyranny in his own procuratorship, which a guilty conscience told him were but too well founded. This fear overcame at once all his remaining love of justice and equity. What was the life of one poor man to him, though innocent, or even eminently good,

good, when put in the balance against the indignation of a whole people, and the resentment of his Sovereign?

BUT, determined as he was to sacrifice the cause of justice to his views of worldly interest, Pilate could not even yet proceed to the last act of iniquity, without taking some steps to testify his extreme reluctance to yield to the importunity of the Jews, and his firm persuasion of JESUS's innocence. Commanding him to be brought out of the judgement-hall, still in the dress of mock-royalty before described, the Governour took his seat upon the tribunal, which had been erected for him on the pavement before the palaceⁱ; and here, in the presence of an immense croud of people, (it being the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour^{*}, or rather perhaps the third hour, viz. nine o'clock), he said to the multitude, *Behold your King*^k! "This is he who avows himself to be your King, and who is owned

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ⁱ John xix. 13.

^k Verse 14.

^{*} According to St Mark, chap. xv. 25. it was but the third hour when they crucified JESUS, or nailed him to the cross. Various methods have been taken to reconcile this difference; of which see *Vossius de passione*, &c. p. 206. The most probable seems to be that of those who think the original reading in St John here, was "the third hour," which is favoured by several manuscripts. See Whitby on Mark xv. 25.

as such by many of your nation." By which address he probably meant to interest the national honour in behalf of JESUS, or to expose the sottishness of those who owned such a person for their King, or to draw from them a public acknowledgement of the sovereignty of Cæsar, and an abjuration of the seditious principles of the Galileans. *Behold your King!*—Our King! cried they: *Away with him, away with him! crucify him!*¹—*Shall I crucify your King?* said Pilate. Think what a reproach it will be to your nation!—The Chief Priests answered, quite contrary to their real inclinations, *We have no King but Cæsar*. Their hearts were set upon a Messiah who should be a mighty conqueror, and Cæsar's government they secretly detested; yet they scrupled not to make this profession in order to serve the present purpose, *We have no King but Cæsar*.

IN conclusion, Pilate called for water, and washed his hands in the presence of the multitude (as Judges were commanded to do in certain cases among the Jews²) saying, *I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it*³. If he thought, by this ceremony, and the declaration which accompanied it, to soften their hearts with the terror of Divine vengeance, it was not unreasonable. If he thought to acquit himself of

guilt,

¹ John xix. 15. ² Deut. xxi. 6. ³ Matth. xxvii. 24,—26.

guilt, for which the same ceremony was sometimes used among the Heathens, it was vain. But in any view, as a public testimony to our SAVIOUR's innocence, nothing could be more significant. The Jews, however, not startled in the least by this awful warning, cried out as with one voice, *His blood be upon us, and on our children* °! Alas, infatuated men! they little considered the import of what they said; but if ever the most direful imprecation received a full and lasting accomplishment in the eyes of the whole world, it was this.

THEN Pilate, without any farther struggle, passed sentence according to their desire. He released Barabbas to them, and condemned JESUS to the death of crucifixion °.

AMONG many useful lessons which this part of the history teaches, I shall only observe, from the example of Pilate, how dangerous the love of this world, and its interests, is to the moral principles of men;—with what reluctance, and after how many struggles, even bad men sometimes are induced to commit flagitious actions;—how desirous vice is to retain some portion of virtue in its company, or at least to preserve the appearance of it, after it is indeed gone;—and *lastly*, how injudicious men are, in leaving the plain

° Matth. xxvii. 25.

° Verse 26. Mark xv. 15. Luke xxi. 24. John xix. 16.

plain path of rectitude and justice, to support themselves by the crooked arts of political craft. The devices employed by Pilate to satisfy the Jews, and at the same time to save the life of JESUS CHRIST, were ineffectual for either of these purposes; nay through them JESUS actually suffered much more than he would probably have done, had the Governour condemned him the moment he was brought before his tribunal. Nor did the great sacrifice of conscience which this unrighteous Judge made at last to his political interest and ambition, by giving sentence against JESUS, contribute in the least to the security or advancement of his favourite objects. For, though it is not related in our Gospels, we know from good authority, that he was, not long after, removed from his government in disgrace, sent to Rome to answer for his crimes, and banished to Vienna in Gaul; where, languishing for some time in great misery, he at length ended his life with his own hands. What more could he have suffered, or rather would he have suffered so much, even in the worst times, by preserving a good conscience, and adhering to his duty? Nor was the fate of Herod, our SAVIOUR's former Judge, very dissimilar: For he also died in exile and confinement at Lyons in the same country, with Herodias the infamous partner and instigator of his crimes.

SECT. IX.

SECTION IX.

JESUS going to Mount Calvary.

IN order to suffer the death of the cross, which, for high and important reasons, was decreed for the SAVIOUR of men, and voluntarily submitted to by him, it was necessary that he should lay aside all appearance of his Divinity, and take the form of a servant^a, and be reduced to the condition of the most poor and helpless of the children of men. For if he had not been found in that condition by his enemies, they would not have dared to seize his person, or to make any attempt upon his life. At least the slightest exertion of his Divine power in his own defence, would have baffled all their attempts in a moment, or even drawn down destruction on themselves. When the armed band came to apprehend him in the garden, upon his only presenting himself to them, they went backward, and fell to the ground. But after this we see no vestige of power and majesty about him, except in healing Malchus's ear. Far from using any means of defence, he allowed himself to be treated as a man outwardly destitute and forlorn, and

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unable

^a Philip. ii. 9.

unable to make the least resistance to the violence of his persecutors. And indeed throughout the whole course of his ministry, all his Divine powers and endowments were employed only for the glory of God, from whom he received them: With respect to himself, he derived or sought no more benefit from them, either for procuring the good things, or avoiding the evils of this life, than if he had not been possessed of them at all. Hence we have seen him arrested and bound like a malefactor by the hands of ruffian soldiers, led about from one unjust tribunal to another, and every-where insulted and abused with impunity by the meanest servants, mocked, buffeted, spit upon, and scourged; nor any mark of greatness left him, but that Divine patience, serenity, and fortitude, with which he sustained every affliction. Thus, from obedience to God, and love to men, he voluntarily renounced all the external prerogatives and privileges of his rank: he was crucified through weakness, and put to death in the flesh. The same voluntary inability to defend himself from injury, appears in what follows; and there was the same necessity for it, that he might become obedient unto death, and suffer grievous and humiliating calamities, before

b 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

c 1 Peter iii. 18.

fore he should enter into the glory of his everlasting kingdom.

SENTENCE being passed against JESUS by Pilate, the soldiers, who had exhausted their ingenuity in deriding his pretended majesty, now began to prepare him for the cross; and taking off the crown of thorns, and the purple robe with which they had dressed him, they put his own raiment on him again^d. Then being brought out of the Judgement-hall, the cross is presented to him, that, according to the custom of persons in his unhappy situation, he might carry it to the place of execution. As this instrument of torture, taking it altogether, was probably too heavy to be born by any one man, though of the greatest strength, it is therefore supposed, that persons condemned to such a death, were required to carry only the transverse beam of the wooden frame. Be this as it will, JESUS meekly received the ignominious tree upon his shoulders, and, staggering under the weight of it, proceeded through some part of the city, in company with two malefactors destined to the same punishment, surrounded with a guard of soldiers, and an infinite multitude of people. As to other pains and indignities inflicted on him by

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^d Matth. xxvii. 31.

the way, the text is silent: but custom, we are told, in such cases, authorised very cruel ones; for executioners following behind, used to push forward the miserable cross-bearers, and make them hasten their pace, with goads and scourges. But setting aside these additional cruelties, what must be the feelings of an ingenuous mind amidst all this ignominious pomp?—At length, however, our SAVIOUR's bodily strength failed him, and he began to sink under his burden; which is not to be wondered at, considering the series of his past sufferings. By the time they were got without the gate of the city, if not sooner, it seemed likely, that unless speedily relieved, he would expire before they reached the place of execution. But who was there that would willingly submit to the disgrace of bearing his cross after him? Not one could be found at that time, either Jew or Gentile. It was necessary to compel some one to perform this office; for which purpose, they pitched upon a man of Cyrene, called Simon^c, whom they met coming out of the country, and who had possibly expressed some indignation at the treatment he saw JESUS receiving. And thus, for the first time, was literally performed, what JESUS had in a figurative sense,

^c Mark xv. 21. Luke xxiii. 26.

seuse, enjoined as an indispensable duty to all his followers, that *if any man would come after him, he must take up his cross and follow him*^f. This Simon, the Evangelist Mark adds, was the father of Alexander and Rufus, two noted men among the early disciples of CHRIST; and these sons, we may be sure, far from wishing to conceal or suppress this fact, would rather glory in it, and esteem the affront now put upon their father, a real honour.

AMONG the multitudes that followed in this execrable procession, there were no doubt many, who, convinced of our SAVIOUR's innocence and worth, could not behold his sufferings without being touched with deep and heart-felt sorrow. It is particularly related, that some of the female sex, more tender-hearted than others, bewailed him with tears, and with loud and bitter lamentations^g: To whom JESUS addressed these memorable words, so expressive of his conscious innocence and dignity, as well as the heroic generosity of his soul: *Daughters of Jerusalem, said he, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children: For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the*

K 3

wombs

^f Matth. xvi. 24.^g Luke xxiii. 27,—31.

wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains; Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?— Thus spoke Jesus, while he suffered the most injurious and provoking treatment which it was possible for an innocent man to receive. The sense of his own wrongs vanishes, in the view of those dreadful miseries which he saw coming on his enemies; and compassion for them makes him in some sort forget his present sufferings. He bids the daughters of Jerusalem reserve their tears for another occasion more worthy of them. His sufferings, when truly estimated, were too honourable and beneficial to be a proper subject of lamentation; but seriously to be deplored was the fate of these tender mourners themselves, and their unhappy offspring, who should live to see days of vengeance, wherein the reproach of barrenness would be esteemed a most desirable blessing; and when the victims of Divine justice, who now gloried in the success of their designs, being reduced to the extremity of affliction and despair, would vainly pray to be on a sudden crushed and buried under the mountains, if they could not be protected by them. For if there were reasons which

which could justify the permitting such calamities to befall an innocent man (as there certainly were), what punishments must be thought due to obstinate and incorrigible depravity?

It is related of Agis* a king of Sparta, that as he was going to execution, he perceived one of the Officers lamenting his fate with tears: Upon which he said, 'Dry up your tears, my friend; for, as I suffer innocently, I am in a better condition than those who condemn me contrary to law and justice.' And so saying, he cheerfully offered his neck to the executioner.—Much praise is given also to a St Hilaire†, who having his arm shot off in battle by the same bullet that killed his General, Marshal Turenne, and seeing his own misfortune bitterly lamented by his son, said to him (pointing to Turenne), 'It is not for me, but for that great man, you ought to mourn.'—Let us not detract from the merit of these sayings: they are generous and noble; they bear some resemblance to that of our Saviour above mentioned. But let not the professed admirers of moral excellence, put them, or any thing of the like kind in ancient or modern history, upon a level with it. Never did

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* Plutarch in Agis.

† Voltaire in Lewis XIV.

so generous and tender a compassion, shine forth in the midst of such sufferings and provocations. And if any one is disposed to draw an unfavourable conclusion from the prediction uttered by our SAVIOUR on this occasion, importing that his wrongs should soon be amply avenged, in the unparalleled miseries which were coming on the authors of them; let such a reasoner only look to the event, and he will be obliged to acknowledge, that these awful words of JESUS were not the impotent wishes or menaces of despair and revenge, but the faithful and gracious warnings of a divine prophet, acquainted with the decrees of Heaven, persuaded of the wisdom and righteousness of its dispensations, and more afflicted at the view of those just judgements which were about to fall on a criminal and devoted nation, than at all the unmerited evils which he himself was now suffering at their hands.

At length they arrived at the place appropriated to the execution of malefactors, called therefore in Hebrew *Golgotha*, and in Latin *Calvary*, or *the place of a skull*^a. It was a small eminence or hill upon the greater mount of Moriah, and lay without the walls of the city, as a place held polluted and execrable,

^a Matth. xxvii. 33.

crable. Here, before the executioners proceeded to do their office, an offer was made to our SAVIOUR, of *vinegar to drink mingled with gall*¹, or, as another Evangelist has it, *wine mingled with myrrh*². The liquor probably consisted of several ingredients, whereof wine or vinegar made the chief; and the effect of it was, it should seem, to intoxicate and stupify the mind, and thus to deaden the sense of bodily pain. It was either a drink commonly allowed to malefactors condemned to the cross; or more probably, this potion was prepared for JESUS by the pious care of some friendly-minded persons, who wished if possible to abate the pain of those exquisite and lingering tortures which he was just going to suffer. Nor did he disdain to let the drink touch his lips, to shew that he was not insensible of the intended kindness, and probably too the sensation of thirst was already become very painful to him. But whatever the senses might crave, *when he had tasted it, he would not drink*; because he judged it unworthy of him to borrow any aid from such artificial supports. He would not receive a potion which was to lessen the sense of pain only, by impairing or suspending the use of reason. Sinners often fly to intoxicating liquors, as a remedy against reflection,

¹ Matth. xxvii. 34.² Mark xv. 23.

tion, and the reproaches of conscience. JESUS refused, by such means, to alleviate the pains of his cross. He was determined to endure, without any mitigation, all the rigour of the death assigned him, in the entire possession of his soul, and with all his organs of sensation in an unvitiated state. This conduct certainly displays the firmness and self-denial of genuine virtue, in a situation to flesh and blood the most awful that can well be conceived.—But we are now come to the last scene of our Blessed SAVIOUR's humiliations on earth, the ever-memorable fact of his crucifixion, where he perfected his obedience, and presented himself an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, the most acceptable that ever had been, or ever will be offered to the Almighty.

SECT. X.

SECTION X.

The Crucifixion of JESUS.

IN treating of this event, we shall *first* consider what was done or said to CHRIST by others ; and, *secondly*, what words were spoken by CHRIST himself while he hung alive upon the cross. The former will give us some idea of the severity of his afflictions: from the latter we shall see with what meekness and fortitude he sustained them.

I. THE death of the cross, not to speak of its ignominy, was one of the most painful deaths ever devised by the ingenious cruelty of men. There was a wooden frame consisting chiefly of two pieces, of which the one stood upright, with its lower end fixed in the ground, and the other ran across it in a direct line at the top ; the whole resembling pretty nearly the figure of the letter T, or rather perhaps †. To the lower part of the erect post, the feet of the unhappy sufferer were fastened by strong nails piercing them through and through, and running also a sufficient way into the wood ; and to the transverse beam, the hands were in like manner nailed on either side,

side, the arms being extended to their utmost length. Thus the whole weight of the body hung upon wounds made in those parts of it which are capable of giving the sharpest sensation of pain; until, by slow degrees, with the mere violence of pain, the vital spirits were exhausted, and death approached with lingering steps, to put an end to the unsupportable torture. It is said, that some have hung for whole days in this posture without dying, some even for two or three days. Such was the death inflicted on JESUS CHRIST!

THE executioners strip off his cloaths, and fix his naked body to the ignominious tree, with nails driven through his hands and his feet; so that he now appeared to be literally the person described by the Psalmist, when he said, *Dogs have compassed me about; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet*^a. Thus also was fulfilled his own prediction concerning the manner of his death, saying, *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up*^b. And again, *If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me*^c. Whether the whole frame of the cross was laid flat upon the ground till the body was fixed to it, and then raised up in a perpendicular form,

^a Psal. xxii. 16.^b John iii. 14.^c Chap. xii. 32.

form, or whether, being first so erected, the sufferer was obliged to ascend it by steps, and nailed to it in a standing posture, it does not seem easy or important to determine *, as there were examples of both ways; and this is a circumstance concerning which the text is silent.

BUT to add to the public infamy inflicted on our LORD in this execution, his cross was erected in the middle, between those of the two malefactors^d with whom he suffered; that place being, it should seem, purposely assigned to him as one esteemed the vilest among the vile. It served however to fulfil another illustrious prophecy concerning the Messiah, which bore that he should be numbered with transgressors^e. Although his innocence was clear and unspotted, yet the malice of his enemies ranked him with the most guilty, and distinguished him from them only by greater ignominy.

ANOTHER mark of disgrace, was the accusation, inscription or title^f put on our SAVIOUR's cross, above his head, to express, according to the custom of the Romans in such cases, the crime for which he suffered:

But

^d Mark xv. 27. ^e Isa. liii. 12. ^f Matth. xxvii. 37.

* See *Vossius de passione*, &c. lib. II. ch. vii. § 30.

But by Pilate's express order, no crime was intimated in this inscription; it only signified in general, that this was *JESUS of Nazareth, KING of the Jews*^e. And being written in large and legible characters^h, and in the three languages then most known in the world, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, men of all nations who were present, might easily read and understand it. The terms in which it was conceived, gave great offence to the Chief Priestsⁱ, who considered it as a public affront to their nation, for having so long expected and wished for a promised King, and after he was come, procuring him to be crucified. They expressed their dissatisfaction to the Governour, and begged him to alter the title, so that it might bear, not that *JESUS was* the King of the Jews, but that he *had said he was*, or vainly pretended to be so. In this, however, Pilate refused to gratify them: he told them that he had written it so, and so it should stand^k. Perhaps he could not alter it by the Roman form of procedure; but if he could, it is likely he was not willing. His answer is more expressive of want of will, than want of power. It seems not improbable that a secret displeasure still rankled in his mind, for having been forced by their importunate and seditious clamours, to condemn

JESUS

^e John xix. 19. ^h Verse 20. ⁱ Verse 21. ^k Verse 22.

JESUS unjustly; and the title, as he had written it, though it might without doubt be understood to proclaim the infamy of the Jews, and the innocence of JESUS, was yet extremely proper to vindicate Pilate himself from the accusation formerly threatened by them against him, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend.*

WHEN the soldiers, who also did the work of executioners, had finished the nailing of our SAVIOUR's body to the cross, they next fell to dividing his garments among them as a perquisite of their office; and there being four of them employed in this cruel service, it was necessary that each should have a share of the spoil, however inconsiderable. Having therefore made an equal division amongst them of all the rest of his cloaths, they agreed not to divide his coat, whereby it would have been rendered useless, being one entire piece, but to cast lots for it, whose it should be'. This circumstance, trivial as it may seem, served to increase the ignominy of our SAVIOUR's sufferings, and to shew in him the literal and exact accomplishment of what was spoken by the Royal Prophet in these remarkable words, *They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots*^m.

BUT

^l John xix. 23, 24.

^m Psal. xxii. 18.

BUT of all the calamitous circumstances attending our SAVIOUR's crucifixion, there were none more extravagant than those reproaches which were cast upon him by different persons, amidst the torments of the cross. It might have been expected, that the rage of his enemies would, when they beheld him in this situation, have been at length satiated, and would have given place to some sentiments of humanity. But what, alas! can appease the rage of ignorance and bigotry, or the insolence of power, in minds estranged from virtue? The SON of GOD, in his last sufferings, found not that sympathy or pity, which, in civilized nations, is commonly shewn to the greatest criminals; and such was the temper of the Jews, that they took a malignant pleasure to deride and insult him in the bitterness of death.

THE first of these outrages^a seems to have proceeded from some of the common people now present, who, as they passed to and fro before our SAVIOUR's cross, wagging their heads in token of scorn and contempt, reviled him in words to this effect: 'Yes! you could
' well pull down the temple, and build it a-
' gain in three days as you boasted, when
' you are not able to save yourself from that
' miserable

^a Matth. xxvii. 39, 40.

‘miserable death! What is become of all
‘your miraculous powers, and lofty pre-
‘tensions, now? Are they fled from you
‘at the time you most needed them? You
‘claimed to be the SON of GOD peculiarly
‘above all others: Give some evidence then
‘of your special interest in his favour, by
‘coming down from the cross: Sure he
‘would not suffer one so dearly beloved by
‘him, to endure these pains.’—In this man-
ner was JESUS derided by a base and un-
grateful people, of whom many had prob-
ably experienced, at divers times, his be-
neficent power. They presumed it was im-
possible, that one reduced to the deplorable
condition in which they now saw him,
could be the Messiah; and since he had
laid claim to that character, they concluded
him to be an impostor, who deserved no
compassion. Such is the effect of mere ex-
ternal circumstances on low and worldly
minds! A reverse of fortune is often suffi-
cient of itself to make a man be abandoned
and insulted by the very persons who wor-
shipped him in his prosperity. The LORD
JESUS really possessed the same worth and
dignity of character, the same miraculous
power, and the same favour with GOD, now
when hanging on the cross, as on those splen-
did occasions, when he fed five thousand per-

L

sons

sons with a few loaves and fishes, or when riding into Jerusalem, he was attended by multitudes, who made the air ring with their hosannas in praise of Zion's King. But his outward circumstances were greatly altered, and the sentiments of the people altered with them.

BUT though the rude populace may have the baseness and cruelty to insult an innocent sufferer amidst excruciating and mortal agonies, surely men of superior rank and education will think it beneath them to countenance such proceedings: they cannot be supposed capable of an inhumanity, which would disgrace the untutored and unfeeling savage. So one would naturally think; but it was not the case. On the contrary, the Chief Priests, the Scribes and Elders^o, now appear fomenting the savage insolence of the mob, and setting an example of it. Their taunting speeches were of this kind: *He saved others; himself he cannot save*^p, (or, *cannot he save?*). They allowed that he was said to have performed miracles of healing on others; but insinuated that these were no better than cheats, because if he had been really possessed of a miraculous power, he would certainly have exerted it to free himself from pain and

^o Matth. xxvii. 41,—43.

^p Verse 42.

and death. To have a power of doing miracles for the welfare of others, and none for one's self, was, in their eyes, perfectly absurd and ridiculous. They added, *If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.* Very likely indeed! They would believe him, if he came down from the cross; and yet in fact they did not believe him, though he rose from the dead. They would believe him, if he wrought miracles to free himself and his followers from affliction, and to gratify them with the honours and pleasures of this world: But they remained in unbelief, because the miracles of JESUS were intended only to establish a kingdom of truth and righteousness in the earth: That is, they would believe him, if he were what he ought not to be; but they disbelieved him, because he did and suffered what duty required. — *Lastly*, the Jewish Rulers assaulted our crucified Saviour with this reproach, the bitterest of all: *He trusted in God; let Him deliver him now, if he will have him! for he said, I am the Son of God*^a. Here they intimated their persuasion, that he was forsaken of God, as well as of men, and that all his former devotion and confidence towards God were vain^r. They now endeavoured to rob him of the only

L 2

consolation

^a Matth. xxvii. 43.^r See Isa. liii. 4.

consolation which was left him, the sense of his Father's love. Yet these learned Rabbis, and proud scorers, might have known, that it was no strange thing for God, infinitely wise and holy, to leave his prophets and saints for a time in great affliction, without abating his love to them.* The slightest inspection of the book of Job might have taught them this lesson.

AFTER such cruel mockings both from the people and their priests, the sensibility of JESUS could not be much more hurt by that rude contemptuous challenge of the soldiers, who, looking at the title on his cross, said to him, *If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself*†. This was of the same import with what he had already heard from others, of whom better things might have been expected. It cannot be doubted, however, that all

* Luke xxiii. 37.

* * There are sufferings which are no punishments ; as,
 ‘ 1st, The effects of God’s absolute sovereignty, (Jacob and Esau)—2^d, Those which come for probation or trial, (Job)
 ‘ —3^d, Those which are sent for the exercise and increase of virtue, (John xv. 2.)—4th, Those which good men are involved in through the neighbourhood of sinners, (Josiah overborn by Manasseh’s sin, 2 Kings xxiii. 26.)—5th, Those which prevent sin and misery, (as, God knowing the power of infection, takes the righteous away by death from the evil to come, Isa. lvii. 1.)—Those sufferings in this world only are punishments, where sin is the natural or moral cause of suffering.’ *Whichcot’s Aphorisms*, 1003.

all these scornful speeches, repeated by so many persons of different denominations, and uncontradicted by any, must have been exceedingly grievous to our Blessed Saviour. They tended to wound his soul, as much as the cross did his body. Yet when thus reviled, he reviled not again, nor threatened. He was to demonstrate his title to God's favour, and to the character of his only Son, not by seizing the honours and pleasures of this world, but by patiently enduring its sharpest afflictions; not by coming down from the cross, but by rising from the grave, and triumphing over death; not by turning his miraculous powers to his own defence and safety, but by employing them for the good of mankind, and the confirmation of the truth. He therefore uttered no complaint under these exasperating provocations, nor made any reply to his revilers; but remained silent and composed, in full trust that his innocence would be vindicated in due time.—We can hardly contemplate the situation and behaviour of JESUS in these trying moments, without recollecting the memorable words of the Wisdom of Solomon^t, where ungodly men are introduced speaking in this manner of the righteous: 'He professeth to

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' himself

^t Chap. ii. 13,—20.

' himself the child of the Lord. He was
 ' made to reprove our thoughts: He is griev-
 ' ous unto us even to behold: for his life is
 ' not like other mens; his ways are of another
 ' fashion. We are esteemed of him as coun-
 ' terfeits: he abstaineth from our ways as
 ' from filthiness: he pronounceth the end of
 ' the just to be blessed, and maketh his boast
 ' that God is his Father. Let us see if his
 ' words be true, and let us prove what shall
 ' happen in the end of him. For if the just
 ' man be the Son of God, he will help him,
 ' and deliver him from the hand of his ene-
 ' mies. Let us examine him with despiteful-
 ' ness and torture, that we may know his
 ' meekness, and prove his patience. Let us
 ' condemn him with a shameful death; for
 ' by his own saying, he shall be respected.
 ' Such things did they imagine, and were
 ' deceived, &c.'—But, to return,

THE last insulting speech that was made
 to JESUS on the cross, came from one of the
 malefactors who were crucified with him^u.
 This unhappy man, equally untouched with
 the horrors of his own guilt, and the charms
 of our SAVIOUR's heroic virtue, did not for-
 bear to rail on him, saying, *If thou be Christ,*
save thyself and us. He was, it seems, too ob-
 durate

^u Luke xxiii. 39,—42.

durate to receive any benefit from the severest of God's judgements here below. He expressed the general sense of his nation with respect to a temporal deliverance from the Messiah; and whether he hoped to interest them in his favour, or whatever was his motive, he joins his suffrage, in the agonies of death, to that of the inveterate enemies of JESUS, who were living at their ease; and far from conceiving any thought of repentance, seems resolved to outdo, in his last moments, the daring profligacy of his former life:—An awful warning to sinners who put off their repentance, and abuse the time of their visitation!

BUT his companion in affliction, the other malefactor, was of a very different disposition. He rebuked the reviler in this manner: 'Are you still, said he, so destitute of the fear of God, as to insult a fellow-sufferer on the verge of eternity? Your being a sharer in the same punishment, should restrain you from such an outrage to him, though he were as guilty as you or I. But our case is widely different from his. We suffer deservedly for our crimes: He hath done nothing amiss*.' Then looking to JESUS with profound veneration, he said, *Lord, remember me when thou*

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comest

* Luke xxiii. 40, 41.

comest to thy kingdom *. Who can forbear to admire this example of faith and penitence ? At a time when JESUS was abandoned by all, and reduced in the eyes of men to the most abject contempt and misery, his innocence and real greatness find an advocate in this penitent malefactor, who confesses him to be the Lord of a future world, and, humbly acknowledging his own guilt and unworthiness, begs only that he would be pleased to think upon him when he should come to his kingdom. Some knowledge of JESUS's character and works he may have had before ; but his faith was without doubt mightily confirmed by what he had seen of his deportment since they set out together from the judgement-hall of Pilate. But however he came by them, he seems to have conceived more just and exalted sentiments of JESUS than the Apostles themselves, who, though they owned him for the Messiah, had hitherto all along dreamed of a worldly kingdom for him.

It only remains on this head, to take notice of a passage or two relating to some of the spectators of our Saviour's crucifixion, just before he expired. Upon his uttering these words, *Eli ! Eli ! lama sabachthani* ² some

* Luke xxiii. 42.

² Matth. xxvii. 46.

some persons present, who seem to have been Jews from foreign parts, come up to Jerusalem upon occasion of the Passover, not understanding the language of the country, and being deceived by the similar sound of the words, imagined that he called for Elias; a mistake the more easily gone into, as it was a common opinion among the Jews, that the celebrated ancient prophet of that name was to return to the earth before the coming of the Messiah. *This man*, said they, *calleth for Elias*^a. And a little after, when Jesus said, *I thirst*^b! one of the standers-by made haste and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, or wine of the poorest sort, which was in a vessel by the cross, and putting it upon a rod or stalk of hyssop, reached it up to his mouth. This action, one would naturally think, proceeded from a motive of compassion. But if it be the same that is mentioned by St Luke^c, as it seems to be, though related there a little out of its place, it was done by way of insult. No doubt the drink, bad as it was, might be thought capable to revive the fainting spirits of the Sufferer, and to prolong the period of a miserable existence. But, how fore was the distress which required such refreshment, and could obtain no better! In the mean time, both

^a Matth. xxvii. 47.^b John x. 28.^c Luke xxiii. 36.

both the person who presented the vinegar to our Lord, and others with him, seem to have had some expectation of a very extraordinary event near at hand ; for they said, *Well, now, let us see whether Elias will come to save him^a.*

AND thus far of the things said or done to CHRIST by others, before he expired on the cross. They are recorded by the Evangelists, to shew us what a combat our LORD had to sustain in that sad hour ; what outrages he received during the last moments of his life, through the malice or ignorance of men ; and what exquisite pains he willingly endured, to benefit us.—We now proceed to consider the words spoken by JESUS CHRIST himself, on this most affecting occasion.

II. THE cross was the grand theatre of our SAVIOUR's virtues. There they were put to the severest proof, and there they shone forth with distinguished lustre. The first words he uttered in this extremity of bodily pain, were words of mercy and compassion to his crucifiers: *Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do^c.* This intercessory prayer, offered up either at the very time the executioners were nailing his body to the tree,

or

^a Matth. xxvii. 49. ^c Luke xxiii. 34.

or immediately after, discovers the piety and benignity of his heart, in circumstances the most apt to provoke impatience and resentment. Here is no appearance of distrust in God, or of a mind unhinged by the weight of affliction. Jesus expresses indeed a just sense of the guilt of his enemies, and of his own innocence, together with a full persuasion that God was on his side; that he would not refuse to hear his prayers, and that he highly repented the vile and cruel treatment now given to his only begotten Son: but at the same time (as became the only SON of God) he intercedes with him in behalf of his merciless enemies, and pleads the only thing that could be thought of to alleviate their guilt and punishment, *They know not what they do!* "They are ignorant of the heinous sinfulness of their conduct towards me, and know not that it is indeed the Messiah whom they crucify."—Thus he prayed for them. Nor is the mercy craved in this prayer, shortened with any limitations. It extends equally to all who shared in the guilt of his crucifixion; to the Chief Priests, Elders and Scribes, who conspired against him; to the false witnesses, who calumniated him; to the soldiers, who apprehended, and used him so despitefully; to Pilate, who condemned him; to the people, who insulted him;

him; and the executioners, who nailed him to the cross. None of them are excluded from the wide embrace of his generous and forgiving love; and there is none of them for whom he does not perform the office of an advocate and intercessor. *Father, forgive them!* "Pardon their ignorance. Cast them not off entirely. Shut them not out for ever from the benefit of repentance." Here the LORD JESUS perfectly fulfilled the sublime precept formerly enjoined by him, to *love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us*¹. And thus he executed on the cross, the priestly function of *making intercession for transgressors*². For we may justly consider him in this instance, pleading the cause of all sinners in every age of the world, whether they be such as reject the faith of the gospel, or such as, professing to believe, do not yield obedience to it: *Father, forgive them! for they know not what they do*. And here all sinners are encouraged to repent, with an assurance, that every alleviating circumstance will be considered, to lessen or extenuate the greatness of their guilt.

IN the next speech of our LORD on the cross, we have those sweet consoling words spoken

¹ *Matth. v. 40.*

² *Isa. liii. 12.*

spoken by him to the penitent malefactor, who, on the cross beside him, prayed to have some place in his remembrance when he should come to his kingdom. Our SAVIOUR's answer to him was full of goodness and majesty. *Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise*^b. From whence it appears, that the mind of JESUS was not broken or dejected with sorrow, but preserved that serenity which is the fruit of conscious innocence, and the sure prospect of a glorious reward not far distant. He made no reply to his insolent deriders and revilers; but he could not deny the petition of a sinner, truly humble and contrite in heart. He readily declares his acceptance of the noble profession now made to him; and assures this sincere, tho' late penitent, of a place with him that very day in paradise. To teach us by the way, that no sinner ought, at any time, to abandon the thought of repentance, from despair, unless he encourage himself in sin, by the hope that a death-bed repentance will suffice.—The Pharisees, who had beheld with concern the rising fame and authority of the LORD JESUS, flattered themselves that from henceforth he would gain no more converts. How much were they mistaken? He gains a disciple in
their

^b Luke xxiii. 43.

their presence, and amidst the tortures of the cross. His extreme sufferings cannot make him omit to forward the salutary purpose of his mission; and as he had always, with full authority, granted to sinners the benefit of pardon, when they shewed signs of true repentance, so he continues to do the same with his latest breath.

BUT our admiration of the piety and fortitude of JESUS, under the sharpest pangs of bodily affliction, must be greatly increased when we consider the following passage, which represents him on the cross disposing of the only temporal concern which remained to him. Among many other spectators of our SAVIOUR's crucifixion, there was his mother, and her sister Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene, and John the beloved disciple¹. These affectionate followers of the LORD JESUS loved to be present with him even in his most afflicting abasement; and while the rest of the disciples fled and hid themselves for fear, or at least kept at a prudent distance, this faithful company departed not from the foot of the cross. They were all of them, we may believe, penetrated with deep sorrow; but the mother of JESUS stood

¹ John xix. 25,—27.

stood distinguished by the superior weight of her affliction, having now experienced the fulfilment of old Simeon's prophecy, that *a sword should pierce through her soul*^{*}. When JESUS, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple standing by her whom he loved, he presented his friend to her with these words, *Woman, behold thy Son*¹! As much as to say, 'That is he who will henceforth supply my place, and perform the duty of a son to you.' Then addressing himself to the beloved disciple, and carrying his looks to her, he said, *Behold thy mother*^m! 'I commend my dear parent, now left desolate, to your friendly care: Regard and treat her as your own mother.'

THE language of love is easily understood by those who feel that affection. A single word, or look, is often sufficient to explain the intentions of a friend, and to secure the prompt and chearful execution of what would be otherwise burdensome. *From that hour*, adds the Evangelist, without waiting till after our LORD's resurrection, and in the very depth of his humiliation, *that disciple took her unto his own home*. This passage discovers an attention and composure of mind in our LORD, which is truly wonderful, considering

* Luke ii. 35.

¹ John xix. 26.

^m Verse 27.

considering his present circumstances: It affords a striking proof of his filial tenderness, joined with social love; and shews how high a sense he had, both of the common duties of natural affection, and of the more rare and delicate obligations of private friendship. Exquisite and increasing pains of body, so apt in ordinary cases to occupy and overpower the mind, are not able to prevent his consulting even the temporal welfare of those who were dearest to him, or his leaving them, before he departs, one last and sure pledge of his love to them. *Woman, behold thy son! Son, behold thy mother*!*

PERHAPS

* This memorable passage may be illustrated by the following story out of Lucian:—Eudamidas the Corinthian, though in low circumstances himself, was happy in the friendship of two very worthy persons, Charixenus and Aretheus. Eudamidas finding himself drawing near his end, made his will in the following manner:—‘I leave my mother to Aretheus, to be protected by him in her old age. I bequeath to Charixenus the care of my daughter, desiring that he would see her disposed of in marriage, and portion her at the same time with as ample a fortune as his circumstances shall admit. And in case of the death of either of these my two friends, I substitute the survivor in his place.’

These friends accepted of their respective legacies with great satisfaction; and one of them, Charixenus, dying a few years after his friend the testator, the survivor, Aretheus, not only took care of his mother, but made an equal distribution of his estate between his daughter and an only daughter he had of his own, solemnizing both their marriages in one day. *See Letters of Sir Thomas Fitzosburne.*

PERHAPS, however, our LORD was overcome at last by his sufferings, when he cried out, *My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me*ⁿ?—So indeed these words have been understood, and thence urged by some against our SAVIOUR's character; concluding them to be words of extreme impatience, and even of absolute dejection and despair. But others, with much more reason, as I apprehend, consider this exclamation of the Holy JESUS, only as a fervent address made to GOD, for an end of his excruciating pains, in the same words which had been formerly used by his royal ancestor David. The words might have been rendered, "How far, or for how long a time hast thou forsaken me?" And they express in effect the same sense with the words immediately following in that place, *Why art thou so far from helping me*^o? When David used them, he was in affliction indeed, but not in despair, as one who considered himself to be now entirely cast off by GOD, absolutely and for ever excluded from his favour. Neither can they have any such meaning in the mouth of our Blessed SAVIOUR. They are rather to be taken as an earnest and affectionate application to his Gracious GOD, in whom he perfectly confided, (saying to him, *My God! My God!*)

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that

ⁿ Matth. xxvii. 46.

^o Psal. xxii. 1.

that he would be pleased to look upon his afflictions as he had done to his sincere servants in former ages, and bring them to a speedy conclusion. In the Hebrew style, God is said to *forsake* men, when he suffers them to fall into great calamities, and does not interpose suddenly for their deliverance, though in the mean while he love them tenderly; and though they also have, or ought to have, a firm persuasion of his love towards them^p. Except the extreme bodily pain which our LORD was now enduring, there is nothing to countenance the supposition of his having any distrust of his Father's love: And this supposition is contradicted by all the rest of his behaviour in the same circumstances, both before and after he uttered the words in question. They express, it is true, an exquisite feeling of pain, altogether unmerited on his part; but import at the same time an earnest desire of succour and relief from GOD, whom he affectionately loved, and into whose bosom he poured his griefs, in full confidence of being heard. He had now hung upon the cross six* long hours, and human malice had spent all its shafts upon him. The suffering

^p Isa. xlix. 13,—17.

* *i. e.* According to our reckoning, from nine o'clock in the forenoon, till three afternoon, Mark xv. 25,—34.

suffering character of the MESSIAH, described by the Prophets, had nearly received its full accomplishment in him: He therefore, in the words of David, intimates his ardent wish that a period might be put to these mortal tortures; and God granted him the desire of his heart, as we shall see presently.

A LITTLE after uttering the above exclamation, JESUS, being parched with a violent drought, the ordinary effect of such bodily torments as he endured, said, *I thirst*^a! And he said so, not merely to procure some abatement of extreme pain, but chiefly with a farther view to the fulfilment of Scripture: which shews that his mind was still unbroken and recollected, and that no circumstances of outward distress could make him lose sight of his high character and mission as the Messiah. For these words occasioned one memorable instance of affliction recorded by the Psalmist, to be fulfilled in him, namely, 'that in his thirst they should give him vinegar to drink'. And this was the only thing that remained to complete the sufferings of the Messiah: For, no sooner had he received the vinegar which was held up to him, and drunk some of it, than he said,

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^a John xix. 28.^r Psal. lxix. 21.

It is finished^s!—which surely was not the language of dejection, but of holy triumph and exultation. The Son of God was satisfied that he had fully obeyed his Father's will, and that his obedience was entirely acceptable. His mind was now at ease, his labours ended, his deliverance and reward at hand. All things foretold by the ancient prophets concerning the humiliations and sufferings of the Messiah, had now received their accomplishment in him; and therefore, like an illustrious combatant, who hath gained the victory, and is just ready to be crowned, he said, *It is finished*!—And to shew how well assured he was of God's favour,

He only added these words, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*^t! and then immediately bowed his head, and expired; in full confidence that he now resigned his life into the hands of an all-powerful friend, who would restore it to him again with unspeakable honour and felicity. But these last words, as well as some which he had spoken a little before, being uttered by him with a loud and distinct voice, give ground to think that some degree of strength yet remained to him, and that the event of his death was not naturally to be expected so soon. Indeed it seems

^s John xix. 30.^t Luke xxiii. 46.

seems to have been hastened through the special favour of GOD to the SON of his love. JESUS had desired a speedy dismissal from his sufferings when all things were fulfilled, and GOD granted his desire. Having given full proof of his patience and obedience, GOD was pleased to shorten the duration of his pains, and to release him from the torments of the cross, sooner than the strength of nature gave reason to expect.

THUS died JESUS CHRIST; and from these concluding scenes of his life, when his virtue and piety were put to the severest test, and suffered the greatest misery which this world could inflict, who is there but must acknowledge the perfection of his character? The foregoing history, indeed, exhibits only a part of the behaviour of JESUS here below; but a very important part, and that which supplies us with the strongest proofs of his integrity and incomparable merit. It is entirely agreeable to his former life; only it rises with distresses, and shines most brightly in the furnace of affliction. Had an ordinary man, though of esteemed probity and religion, been exposed to so long a combat with the powers of darkness, and to such varied assaults of malice and cruelty, we should not have been surprised to hear him utter

some complaints and murmurings; some appeals to Heaven in favour of oppressed innocence, or even demands of vengeance for crying iniquity; at least some expressions of resentment against his oppressors, and claims of sympathy from fellow-mortals. If extreme calamities inflicted on an innocent man, should at times extort from him words of anger, impatience, or violent grief, the severity of the trial would strongly plead his excuse with every humane and candid mind. But no apology is wanted for the crucified JESUS. Nothing that argues moral weakness or imperfection escapes from him, amidst the fiercest temptations. His goodness appears to be of that kind which is not to be overcome of evil; his meekness, serenity, fortitude, benevolence, resignation to GOD, and trust in him, remain unshaken, or rather derive new lustre from every thing that seemed most capable to impair and destroy them*.

THE character of JESUS is not drawn directly, and in form, by any of his four historians:

* This would have excited the admiration of Cicero more than any example which he had access to know, or even was able to imagine. He says, 'Ea quæ videntur acerba, ita ferre, ut nihil a statu naturæ discedas, nihil a dignitate sapientis, robusti animi est magnæque constantiæ.' *Cic. Off. i. 28.*

rians : they only relate, with artless simplicity, what he said and did, in the different circumstances of his ministry, till he expired on the cross. They tell these things as facts which they knew to be true, and leave their readers from thence to collect his character for themselves. They intimate also, that many other things of the like kind were said and done by him, which, for brevity's sake, they omit: tho' attached to him by the strictest ties of friendship and affection, they make no encomiums on him, or reflections on his enemies. By the confession of all, the character which he sustained, is, in respect of its pretensions, the most singular and elevated that ever was known among men: it is such as eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor had it entered into the heart of man to conceive; and yet, throughout a long series of speeches and actions, it stands supported in the evangelical records with perfect propriety. Upon the most attentive and impartial examination, it will be found, that no word or deed is ascribed there to JESUS, which is inconsistent with the unexampled character he bore, or rather which does not tend to confirm it. How could this happen? Was it the fruit of ingenious fiction, or was it fact? To suppose that two or three illiterate men invented this character, and described it in

the manner they have done, is absolutely incredible; it would have exceeded the utmost powers of human imagination, assisted by all the learning in the world. This fact can be accounted for no other way than by admitting the truth of another fact, which we have every reason to believe, namely, That the Evangelists related nothing but what they saw and heard, or what they were persuaded of by convincing evidence; and to do this, required no great learning or natural ability, but only integrity and honesty*.

BUT, did such an amiable and accomplished character really exist in the world as our Gospels have described? then surely it challenges deep attention and veneration from all men who have any occasion to be acquainted with it. In the moral world, nothing ever equalled it, before or since its appearance; and it attracts our regard by its rareness, as well as by its beauty and grandeur, to say nothing of the interest we have in attending to it†. Whence comes it, then, that

* See this argument urged with great force by Dr Mac-knight, in his *Truth of the Gospel History*, B. II. ch. iii. § 3.

† I here give the substance of some observations of the late Principal Leechman, whose memory will ever be dear and venerable to me and many others who attended his Lectures

that even among the professed followers of CHRIST, there is so much insensibility to this incomparable moral beauty; and that hardly any thing relating to him interests them less than the unexampled excellence of his temper and behaviour? Alas! the bulk of mankind are too much devoted to the cares and interests of this life, and the pleasures of sense, to have any nice relish or discernment as to things in their nature purely spiritual and moral. And of those who profess religion, how often has the whole attention and zeal been turned to matters of controversy, to dark and mysterious speculations, and to the supporting of certain favourite tenets and systems of doctrine quite remote from the practice of life, under the notion of an orthodox faith; while they have in a great measure overlooked morality, and perhaps despised it?—In general, there are other qualities which often engage more of our esteem, though far less deserving it. We admire wit and learning, and extensive knowledge. We applaud

Lectures when he was Professor of Divinity. His acknowledged excellence in that department, lay not so much in inculcating his own particular sentiments, however just, upon every controverted point; as in stating different opinions with fairness and perspicuity, encouraging literature and free inquiry, exciting his pupils to the love of christian truth and piety, and directing them how to form right sentiments for themselves.

applaud the inventors of arts and sciences, or the successful improvers of them; the Founders of States, wise Legislators, and such as have distinguished themselves by their political sagacity; or perhaps we are struck with military glory, and extol the conquerors of the earth: many are captivated with still vainer things, outward magnificence and ornament, honours, titles, equipage, and whatever belongs to the passing scenery of this world. But the glories of a perfect moral character, an uniform course of consummate and unblemished virtue, a complete system of the sublimest precepts, first taught, and then exemplified by their Author, under every circumstance of discouragement, disgrace and pain, which the world could inflict: these objects, though much more singular and extraordinary than any of the former, as well as more grand and valuable; why, these escape our notice, or are beheld with mortal coldness and indifference. All men are endowed by nature with a sense of right and wrong; but in many, this moral faculty is little cultivated: Few take delight to mark, admire, and imitate the several excellencies of a finished character; and some have scarce any perception of the worth of goodness by itself, separate from foreign recommendations, and stript of all the glare of outward advantages.

advantages. But certainly every competent and unprejudiced judge in these matters will acknowledge what was said of a great Statesman, to be more strictly true of JESUS CHRIST, than of the most accomplished among men, *viz.* 'That he concluded his life rather like a rising than a setting sun, and appeared at the end of his course with unclouded lustre and glory.'

SECT. XL.

SECTION XI.

*Of Divine Attestations given to JESUS at his
Crucifixion.*

HAVING traced the circumstances of our SAVIOUR's passion till he expired on the cross, which completed the example of his patience and obedience; the historical part of this Essay may seem to be fully executed. But, that the singular efficacy of his death may be better understood, and the blessed fruits of it gathered with more advantage, it seems necessary to subjoin a brief and summary account of what followed, even to his ascension into Heaven; a period of the Gospel History which is crouded with facts chiefly tending to the confirmation of our faith and hope in him.

AND what first demands our attention here is, the prodigies which accompanied or followed the crucifixion of CHRIST, and which ought to be considered as so many divine testimonies in favour of him, and against his persecutors, at the time of his lowest abasement. Of this kind the first is, that miraculous darkness^a which overspread the whole land

^a Matth. xxvii. 45,—54.

land of Judea during the three last hours of our SAVIOUR's life, from the sixth to the ninth, according to the Jewish way of reckoning; or as we would say, from mid-day till three in the afternoon. This darkness, resembling perhaps a total, or nearly total eclipse of the sun, could not however arise from that natural cause, seeing our LORD suffered at the time of the Jewish Passover, when the moon was always about full. It was therefore evidently preternatural, and could not but appear very surprising and tremendous to all who saw it. Heaven seemed visibly to frown upon the Jewish nation for their great wickedness in crucifying the Messiah. The face of nature put on, in that guilty land, a gloomy and menacing aspect; or, in the language of the prophet, *God caused the sun to go down at noon, and darkened the earth in the clear day*^b; that all might see he was offended at those who crucified his dear SON, though he permitted them to execute that criminal enterprise.

ANOTHER striking prodigy which attended our SAVIOUR's crucifixion, was the rending of the inner vail of the Temple^c, between the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies, within which none were permitted to

^b Amos viii. 9.

^c Matth. xxvii. 51.

to enter at any time, except the High Priest alone, and he only on one certain day of the year. This vail or curtain, very strong in its contexture, was, about the time that our SAVIOUR expired on the cross, instantaneously, and without any visible cause, rent in two, from the top to the bottom:—to signify that God, on account of the great degeneracy of his people, disdained to dwell any more among them; that he abhorred the most sacred recess of his temple, when frequented by such worshippers; and that he was now determined to abolish the Jewish peculiarity.

A further token of the Divine displeasure at this time, against the Jews, was an earthquake^d; which probably shook in some measure the whole city of Jerusalem, but was most sensibly felt at Mount Calvary, where rocks were rent, and sepulchres opened by it. Earthquakes never fail to alarm those whose lot it is to be visited with them; and though they are natural events, this does not hinder them to have a meaning and design in the moral government of God. They were considered by the Jews as tokens of the Divine displeasure for the sins of men^e; or as warnings to repentance; and what harm could arise, if they were so regarded and improved among

^d Matth. xxvii. 51.

^e Psal. xviii. 7.

among all nations? However, the one of which we speak was peculiarly remarkable, considering when and where it happened, and how it concurred with other events which were manifestly preternatural.

THESE two signs last mentioned seem to have taken place immediately after our LORD expired on the cross. — But the most memorable prodigy of all, and that which did eminently suit the grandeur of this occasion, was “the rising of some persons from the dead,” which happened not, however, till after the resurrection of JESUS; only their graves were now opened. The persons who rose were *Saints*, or pious believers, who, having recently died, could not but be well known to their surviving friends and acquaintances in Jerusalem, when they appeared to them. And their appearance to *many*, who certainly knew that they had been dead and buried, would not only fill them with surprise and joy, but would mightily confirm their faith in CHRIST, if they had any favourable dispositions towards him who is *the resurrection and the life*. If, on the contrary, they were careless, vicious, and prejudiced, this great miracle would be of no more use to them, than the resurrection of Lazarus, or of JESUS himself.

SUCH

¹ Matth. xxvii. 52, 53.

SUCH then were the Divine attestations given to the innocence and greatness of JESUS CHRIST, about the time of his ignominious death. They were things of a very public nature, like most of the miracles of CHRIST; and the books in which they are related, were published at a time when multitudes of living witnesses must have known whether the alledged prodigies were true or false. The confutation of any one of them would have shaken the credit of the whole history in which they stand; and that would hardly have been left unattempted in the proper season, among so many able and inveterate enemies, if it could have been done with any hope of success. The prodigies in question, therefore, were acknowledged facts, which could not be disputed in the age in which they happened; nor were they without suitable effects on the immediate spectators. Even the heathen centurion, and the soldiers under his command appointed to guard the executions of this important day, were so struck with the darkness, and the earthquake^s, joined with the manner in which JESUS bore his sufferings, that they could not forbear saying, *Certainly this was a righteous man*^b; or, as other Evangelists express it, *Truly this man was the Son of God*^c.

They

^a Matth. xxvii. 54.

^b Luke xxiii. 47.

^c Matth. xxvii. 54.

Mark xv. 39.

They therefore interpreted the darkness and the earthquake, as we also very reasonably do, to be undoubted signs of the Divine approbation of JESUS CHRIST, and displeasure against the Jews for their cruel and unrighteous treatment of him. Nay, the great body of the Jewish people, who were present from the beginning to the close of this mournful scene, relenting at last, and yielding to the forcible impressions of astonishment and grief, *smote their breasts, and returned* * home; testifying by their dejected looks and melancholy gestures, that they were persuaded of our SAVIOUR's innocence, and apprehensive of Divine vengeance coming on their nation.

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SECT. XII.

* Luke xxiii. 48.

SECTION XII.

*The Body of JESUS taken down from the Cross,
and buried.*

AMONG the Romans, it was the ordinary fate of those unhappy persons who were condemned to the cross, to be denied also the privilege of burial. Having expired by lingering tortures, their dead bodies were left hanging on the gibbet, to be devoured by birds of prey; but Providence ordered it otherwise in the case before us. The day immediately following that of our SAVIOUR'S crucifixion, happened to be the Jewish Sabbath, and was a day of peculiar solemnity at that time, on account of the Passover^a. The Jewish Rulers, therefore, always scrupulous about ceremonies, though regardless of moral duties, went to Pilate, and besought him to give order that the crucified malefactors might be dispatched by breaking their legs, and that their bodies might be removed before the close of the day, lest the Divine Law should be violated, and the Sabbath profaned^b. This request being granted, the soldiers proceeded to execute their orders^c; and seeing the two thieves who were crucified

^a John xix. 31. ^b Deut. xxi. 22. ^c John xix. 32,—37.

crucified with JESUS, still in life, they brake their legs. But when they perceived that JESUS was dead already, they thought it unnecessary to do the same to him^d: only, for greater security, one of them took a spear, and plunged it into his side, from which wound there issued blood and water^e;—a proof that the instrument had pierced his heart, and that if any remains of life had yet been in him, this wound would have effectually destroyed them. This remarkable fact is recorded by the Apostle John^f, from his own personal knowledge as an eye-witness of it, to give us the completest assurance of CHRIST's death, and to shew in that event, the fulfilment of two memorable prophecies; one which bore, that *a bone of him should not be broken*^g; and another which said, *They shall look on him whom they have pierced*^h.

IT was not without a special direction of Providence, that the dead body of JESUS CHRIST was thus treated. The soldiers forbearing to break his legs, as they did those of the rest who suffered with him, seemed to be a thing merely accidental ; but GOD over-rules and directs the hands of men, even in those cases where they seem to be most at
N 2 their

^d John xix. 33.

• Verse 34.

¹ Verse 35, 36, 37.

* Pfal. xxxiv. 21. Exod. xii. 46.

^h Zech. xii. 10.

their own disposal. He would not suffer a bone of him to be broken, because it was his will that the body of CHRIST should remain entire, his resurrection being so soon to follow: But he permitted the spear to pass to his heart; that no doubt might remain concerning the certainty of his death.

THE same great event was farther confirmed by our SAVIOUR's burial, for which also a wonderful and unexpected provision was made by Divine wisdom. At a time when it was most likely that every one would be ashamed or afraid to own any respect for JESUS of NAZARETH, a rich man, and an honourable Counsellor among the Jews, stepped forth to perform the honours of his funeralⁱ. This was Joseph of Arimathea, a man distinguished by his piety and justice^k, still more than by his eminent rank and riches. He was far from approving of the violent measures taken by the Sanhedrim against JESUS^l; on the contrary, he had in his heart become a disciple of his^m, though an undue fear of men had hitherto restrained him from giving any public testimony of his being such. But, now at length shaking off that fear, he went to Pilate, and begged that the

ⁱ Matth. xxvii. 57. Mark xv. 43.

^k Luke xxiii. 50, 51.

^l Luke xxiii. 51.

^m John xix. 38.

the body of JESUS (since it was at any rate to be removed) might be delivered to him. Pilate very readily granted his request, after he had satisfied himself, by inquiring at the centurion who guarded the cross, that JESUS was really dead^a. In consequence of this permission, Joseph took away the body, intending to have it buried with all the marks of decency and respect which the circumstances would allow,

NOR was he the only considerable person who thought of performing these last offices to our crucified LORD. He was assisted in them by Nicodemus^o, a ruler of the Jews, who had the same respect for JESUS in secret, and was till now restrained by the same motives, from publicly avowing his attachment to him, that Joseph himself had been. By the joint care of these two worthy men, the dead body of JESUS was anointed with perfumes and spices prepared for the occasion: It was wrapped in a shroud of fine linen, and swathed, according to the custom of the Jews in burying persons of condition: After which it was deposited near the place of execution, in a new tomb cut out of the solid rock, where no dead body had ever been laid before, and of which

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the

^a Mark xv. 44, 45.^o John xix. 39,—42.

the entrance was barricaded with a large stone: There the Body of the LORD JESUS remained from Friday evening till the next Sunday morning. Had it not been for the pious and timely care of Joseph and Nicodemus, the corpse of our LORD would doubtless have been thrown into some vile ignominious place, along with those of common malefactors: But GOD prevented that indignity, by the seasonable interposition of two honourable men, who seem to have acted in this affair from motives of pure esteem and love to the Blessed JESUS, though they had not the least expectation of his being presently to rise again. Nor is it improbable that they intended to grace his funeral with further honours after the Sabbath was ended, not having time at present to do all that they wished.—But we are now come to

SECT. XIII.

SECTION XIII.

The Resurrection of JESUS, and the Discovery of that Event to his Enemies.

THE resurrection of JESUS CHRIST, is the great hinge on which the truth of his religion turns. *If CHRIST is not risen, says the Apostle, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain*^a. For since he often foretold that he should rise, and referred the Jews to this fact as the capital proof of his being the MESSIAH, it would have been impossible to free him from the charge of imposture if he had not risen: But by his resurrection from the dead, JESUS was declared to be the SON of GOD, with power^b.

THE evidence of CHRIST's resurrection, then, being so essential in the Christian scheme, it was previously necessary that we should be well assured of his death, without which there could have been no resurrection in the case: And hence it is that the Evangelists are so minute and pointed in relating the proofs of both these events. The certainty of his death is established beyond all possibility of doubt, because he died publicly,

N 4

^a 1 Cor. xv. 14.^b Rom. i. 4.

licly, in the presence of thousands of spectators, most of whom were his inveterate enemies; because, even after he expired, a wound was made in his side, which would have infallibly killed any man, though in full health and vigour; because Pilate would not allow the friends of JESUS to take him down from the cross, till he was assured of his death by the Roman Centurion, who attended with a party of soldiers at the crucifixion; and finally, because his body was anointed, shrouded, and laid in the tomb, as known to be truly dead. With regard to his resurrection, that there might be no fraud in it, the tomb which received his body was a new tomb, where no person had ever been laid before, and consequently no other could come out of it: it was a cavity hewn in the side of a rock, to which the only entrance was shut up with a large and ponderous stone; and for farther security, the stone was sealed, and a watch appointed to guard it.

THESE two last precautions were taken at the express desire of the Chief Priests and Pharisees^c; who, knowing that JESUS had promised, as the grand proof of his Divine mission, to rise in three days after his death,

^c Matth. xxvii. 62,—66.

death, and affecting to be apprehensive that his disciples would attempt to make the people believe his resurrection, though conscious in their own hearts of its falsity, resolved at once to load them with the imputation of that foolish and wicked design, and to take effectual measures for preventing the execution of it. The next day, therefore, after our SAVIOUR's burial, that is, on the morning of the Jewish Sabbath, a respectable deputation from them went to Pilate; and intimating to him their suspicions that the disciples of JESUS would come by night, and steal away the body out of the sepulchre, and then give it out that he was risen from the dead, whereby the people should be more dangerously deluded than they were at any time by the impostor himself:—For these reasons, they petitioned the Governour for a guard of armed men to be set upon the sepulchre for three days; at the end of which time, it is likely they intended to expose the dead body of JESUS publicly to the view of all the people, and thus to give them convincing proofs of the vanity of his pretensions. These cautious politicians seem to have entertained no doubt of the success of their project; but they were not aware of what they became bound to, in case the other alternative took place. For, if it should appear that before the end of the
time

time specified, the body of JESUS was removed without any human hands, what was the consequence?—Why, then the Chief Priests and Pharisees did, by the measure now proposed, bring themselves under an indispensable obligation to believe in him as the true Messiah. This great point is now put to a fair trial upon their own terms ; and they must abide by the event, whether it turn out according to their wishes, or otherwise. From Pilate they easily obtained as strong a guard as they pleased, with which they went in person to the sepulchre ; and having fully satisfied themselves and the soldiers, that the body was not already carried away, they put a seal on the door-stone, to prevent the possibility of the sepulchre's being opened and shut again, on any pretence whatever, without their knowledge ; and then left the guard there, with strict orders to keep it in that state till recalled. Thus they blindly laboured to promote the cause they meant to ruin, and to render their own subsequent infidelity more inexcusable.

FOR, when the Sabbath was past, and the first day of the week began to dawn^d, our LORD having been in the grave one whole day of twenty-four hours, and a part of two other days, there was felt about the place of his

^d Matth. xxvii. 2,—4.

his sepulchre, a great earthquake, occasioned by the presence of an Angel, who, descending from Heaven with amazing splendour, rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat down upon it. At that instant, the body of JESUS was reanimated; and, laying aside the dress of the sepulchre, he arrayed himself in the ordinary habit of the living, and came forth from the tomb. The guards were present; but what resistance could they make to the power of God? At the earthquake, and the glorious appearance of the Angel, they shook for fear, and were for a time deprived of sense and motion. If their consternation hindered them to see JESUS coming out of the tomb, they could not but see, when they recovered themselves, that the stone was rolled away, that the body was gone, and the linen cloaths left in an orderly manner in the sepulchre; all which facts, with the awful circumstances preceding them, gave strong ground to believe, that the person buried there, and watched by them, was come to life. But whether they were driven away from the sepulchre immediately by their terror, and durst never look back to it, or whether they withdrew, after finding, upon careful examination, that there was no further occasion for their attendance there, they certainly did retire soon, and probably to some house or
safe

safe place among their acquaintances, where they might rest and recollect themselves a while; it being too early an hour to have access to the Chief Priests, from whom they had received their commission. In this interval, it may be well supposed, that much conversation passed among themselves, and others whom they met with, about the surprising events which had just happened at the sepulchre. As soon as they found an opportunity, some of the watch, in name of the whole, waited on the Chief Priests, and related to them the matters of fact as they really were^e. A plain and undisguised account of the truth in this case, served at once for a complete vindication of their own conduct, and for affording the Rulers who employed them, a proof of CHRIST's resurrection, which they could not fairly deny, seeing it came up to their own terms. And without doubt they were greatly struck with it; for they immediately called a council, and deliberated what was to be done. But instead of yielding to the truth, or resolving to make farther inquiry about it, they contrive only how to get it suppressed, and are not ashamed to bribe the soldiers with a large sum of money, and an assurance of safety, to publish a palpable falsity in place of it^f. They bade them say, that they had fallen

^e Matth. xxviii. 11,—15.^f Verse 12.

fallen asleep in keeping the guard which was entrusted to them; and that during their sleep, the disciples of CHRIST had come and stolen away the body^s. Nothing could be more improbable, and even contradictory to itself, than that a guard of Roman soldiers, strictly charged to watch, should all sleep upon duty!—that not one of them should be awakened by the unavoidable noise of robbing the sepulchre!—and yet that they should know so well, while sleeping, what was done by men awake! not to mention that the disciples could have no probable motive for attempting the flagitious enterprise here imputed to them, and were absolutely incapable of executing it in the manner it was done, had they been ever so much disposed thereto. Yet, incredible as this story was in the highest degree, it passed current for many years among the obstinate Jews, whose prejudices inclined them to give credit to any absurdity, rather than believe in CHRIST^h.

By all these artifices, however, the truth could not be suppressed. The soldiers had probably told what passed at the sepulchre honestly to several persons, before they agreed to publish the false account of it above mentioned; and even afterwards, there is reason to think they did not all continue faithful

^s Matth. xxviii. 13, 14.

^h Verse 15.

faithful to their infamous engagement with the Chief Priests. Nor did these Priests, in all their challenges to our SAVIOUR's disciples, and all the injunctions they laid upon them not to preach any more in the name of CHRIST, ever presume to accuse them of the crime here laid to their charge, or to call them to account for it. The existence of the above report among the Jews, at the time Saint Matthew published his Gospel, which was probably twenty years after CHRIST's ascension, affords undoubted evidence that a guard was set at the sepulchre of our SAVIOUR, and all possible precautions taken to prevent fraud in a matter of such acknowledged importance as his resurrection from the dead.

AND thus much for the fact of CHRIST's resurrection, and the discovery thereof to his enemies. It has been asked, by way of objection against the Gospel, why did not CHRIST, after he rose, shew himself publicly to the Jews, who crucified him? To which many good answers have been made. But this history supplies us with one altogether sufficient and decisive, though there were no other, namely, That the Jewish Rulers were, or ought to have been, convinced of his resurrection upon their own principles, and had precisely the evidence for it which they themselves required.

SECT. XIV.

SECTION XIV.

Of the Discovery of CHRIST's Resurrection to his Friends.

IN this concluding part of our history, there is nothing more remarkable, than the slow and gradual manner in which the miraculous event we are speaking of was manifested to the Apostles, the chosen witnesses of it; their indisposition, and even backwardness, at first to believe it; and the complete satisfaction they at length obtained concerning it *. We have no reason to think, that any one of the Evangelists has told us every material circumstance which he knew relative to this great fact: But each of them has related, with great simplicity and conciseness, all that he judged necessary to induce a rational and firm belief of it. Their differences shew, that they did not write in concert; and their agreement is such as to exclude the possibility of fiction and imposture. To form their several histories into one clear and consistent narration, including every material circumstance mentioned by any or all of them, as it is very practicable, so it cannot but afford both pleasure and profit to every serious mind.

ABOUT

* See 'Observations on Dr Macknight's Harmony of the Four Gospels, so far as relates to the History of our SAVIOUR's Resurrection.'

ABOUT the very time that JESUS was raised, and came forth from the tomb, a company of his female disciples were setting out from Jerusalem, with sweet spices which they had bought the evening before, when the Sabbath was ended, to anoint his dead body^a; either not knowing that it was anointed already when laid in the sepulchre by Joseph and Nicodemus, or intending to perform that mark of honour in a more perfect manner, and with their own hands. We do not know the names of all who composed this company: But upon comparing the Gospels, it appears that the chief of them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses^b, Salome the wife of Zebedee, and Joanna^c, the wife of Chusa^d Herod's steward. Those Gospels which mention only one^e, or two^f, or three of these women^g, as concerned in the transaction now before us, are far from saying that there were no others in company with them. All agree in naming Mary Magdalene as one, and the first among them; probably because she was most distinguished for her zeal and liberality in this pious service. But the coincidence of time and purpose, gives us ample ground to conclude, that all those women were engaged in it
whom

^a Mat. xxviii. 1. Mark xvi. 1. Luke xxiii. 55.—xxiv. 1. John 20. 1.

^b Mark xv. 47.—xvi. 1. ^c Luke xxiv. 10. ^d Chap. viii. 3.

^e John xx. 1. ^f Matth. xxviii. 1. ^g Mark xvi. 1.

whom I have above enumerated, and others with them.

THEY were persons of some rank and substance in Galilee, who had often attended on JESUS there, and ministered to him, and had come up with him from that country to Jerusalem, on occasion of this Passover, at which he suffered^b. Great was their esteem and veneration for him. They had not gone out of sight of the cross, all the time he suffered on it; and when his dead body was taken down from it, and carried to the sepulchre, they followed after, and observed where it was laid^c: then they retired to their own apartments, having resolved among themselves to take the earliest opportunity of paying the last mournful office to their dearest Friend and Master. But the Sabbath now coming on, or begun, necessarily detained them from doing it for one day; and when that was over*, about sunset, they had only time that night to prepare the spices and ointments which they needed for the occasion.

^b Luke xxiii. 49.

^c Verse 55.

* St Luke seems to say, chap. xxiii. verse 56. that they brought the spices before the Sabbath began. But good Critics have observed, that the words do not necessarily bear this sense, and that the latter clause of the verse might have been translated, 'But yet,' or 'nevertheless, they rested on the Sabbath-day, according to the commandment.'

occasion. But on the day following, being the first of the week, they prevented the dawning of the day, and set out upon their pious enterprize while it was yet dark. They knew nothing of a guard of armed soldiers placed at the sepulchre by the Chief Priests, otherwise they would doubtless have laid aside all thoughts of visiting it. The only difficulty which occurred to them by the way, was, how to get that great stone removed with which they had seen the mouth of the sepulchre shut up, under the direction of Joseph and Nicodemus.

THEY proceeded forward, however, and arriving at the place, were not a little surprised to see the stone rolled away, and the sepulchre open. This relieved their minds for a moment; but how great was their astonishment, when advancing further, and looking into the sepulchre, they found not the Body of the LORD JESUS^k! nor did they see as yet any person to give them the least information about it, for the guards were all gone some time before. What remained to be done? It naturally occurred to them, that they ought to lose no time in carrying this intelligence to the Apostles; but it was not necessary that they should all go in a body
on

^k John xx. 1, — 12.

on that errand. Only Mary Magdalene, and one, or perhaps two more, (the rest remaining at the sepulchre) hastened back to the city; and finding Peter and John, said to them, *They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him*¹. A plain intimation that there were others, or at least one other, along with Mary Magdalene, in this transaction; and that neither she, nor her companions, had any notion at this time of JESUS being risen from the dead.

As little had Peter and John, who immediately upon this information ran to the sepulchre with all speed, and examining it at leisure, found every thing exactly as the women had told them; the stone rolled away, the sepulchre open, and the body gone, but the cloaths with which it had been covered left behind, and lying in such good order as plainly shewed that there had been nothing of fear or precipitation in putting them off^m. Having thus satisfied themselves of the truth of what they had heard from the women, but could not believe merely upon their report, the two Apostles returned to their companions in Jerusalem, not judging it safe or prudent to tarry longer at the sepulchreⁿ.

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BUT

¹ John xx. 2, — 12.

^m Verse 3, — 9.

ⁿ Verse 10.

BUT Mary Magdalene, who had by this time come back to the sepulchre, remained there a while with the other women of her company formerly mentioned. They were loth to leave the place without getting some intelligence of their dear LORD, being full of sorrow and anxiety, and some of them, Mary in particular^o, shedding tears. Nor could she forbear looking once more into the sepulchre, as if she thought it possible that the Body might still be there, or to take a last farewell of the place where it had lain. And now, to her amazement, she beheld two persons in the form and dress of young men^p, but attended with a splendor and majesty which bespoke them to be Angels from Heaven, sitting the one at the head, and the other at the feet of the niche where our SAVIOUR's Body had been laid. The other women with her enjoyed the same vision; and all of them, as it was natural, discovered signs of great surprize and fear. But one of the Angels spake mildly and comfortably unto them, ' shewing that they had no
' just cause of fear and sorrow:—their piety
' was laudable; but they must not expect
' to find JESUS there, nor be uneasy because
' they found him not: He was now risen
' from the dead, according to the promise
' he

^o John xx. 11.^p Verse 12.

‘ he had made before his death: they might
‘ come and look at the place where he had
‘ lain.’ The Heavenly Messenger concluded
with directing them to go and inform his
Disciples that they should soon have the
pleasure of seeing their crucified Master, who
was now alive: And they needed not tarry
at Jerusalem for that purpose beyond their
own convenience, but might return home
whenever they pleased; for he would be in
Galilee before them, where he had appoint-
ed to meet with them after his resurrection.
Matth. xxviii. 5,—7. Mark xvi. 5,—7. Luke
xxiv. 4,—8. John xx. 11,—13.

IN obedience to this order, the women
immediately departed from the sepulchre,
their hearts throbbing with a mixture of
fear and joy. But they had not gone far
on their way to the city, perhaps not out of
the garden where the sepulchre was, when
they were unexpectedly favoured with a
sight of their Master himself. He appeared
first to Mary Magdalene, who seems to have
been now separated some little way from
the rest; and though she did not know him
at the first superficial glance, by reason of his
being in a different dress from what she had
before seen him in, and other obvious cir-
cumstances, yet, to her unspeakable joy, she

was soon convinced beyond all doubt, that it was He, as were likewise all the other women of her company, who a few moments after (as we suppose) joined in this delightful interview; and they thought they could never sufficiently express their love and respect for him. But JESUS desired them not to take up time at present with these testimonies of attachment, as they should have other opportunities of shewing them before his ascension; but to go immediately and communicate to his Apostles and other Disciples, whom he graciously calls his brethren, the joyful tidings, *that he was risen, and would shew himself to them as he had promised; and afterwards ascend to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God.* Importing that they were in due time to share with him in the same felicity. Matth. xxviii. 8,—10. John xx. 14,—17. The women executed these orders with all possible dispatch. Mark xvi. 8,—11. Luke xxiv. 9. John xx. 18.

AND this was the first manifestation that JESUS made of himself to any of his friends after his resurrection. It was to Mary Magdalene, and other pious women who accompanied her. These worthy persons, who had profited so much by his instructions, and had all along discovered such remarkable
zeal

zeal and constancy in their respect for him, were honoured and refreshed with the first sight of their risen SAVIOUR. For the belief of his resurrection they were gradually prepared, *first*, by finding the sepulchre empty; *then*, by the appearance and speech of the Angels; and *lastly*, by the personal interview they were admitted to with JESUS himself. And they, in like manner, prepared the Apostles for the belief of that important fact, by two different messages which they brought them; *first*, that the sepulchre was open, and the body taken away; and *next*, that they had seen a vision of Angels at the sepulchre, who told them he was risen, which in a little while after they found to be true, by beholding him alive with their own eyes. Nor was it without a wise direction of Providence, that the belief of an event so marvellous and surprizing, made its way into the minds of men by such gradual steps, since it would thus give no disturbance to the exercise of their rational faculties, and would take firmer hold of them after they came to be fully satisfied about it.

As for the Apostles, so far were they from receiving this belief in a careless, rash, and easy manner, that they appear to have had very strong and unreasonable prejudices against

it. What CHRIST had said of it to them before his death, was little considered by them, or was above their dull apprehensions; and having in his crucifixion lost their fond hopes of a temporal deliverance by him, they would give no credit to the report of his resurrection^a, brought them by the women who had seen him alive; but treated all their informations concerning the appearance of Angels, and of JESUS himself to them, as idle tales^l. Nay, some of them continued to doubt when they had still greater reason to believe, and withheld their assent till it was in a manner extorted from them by the evidence of all their senses.

OUR SAVIOUR's next appearance seems to have been to the Apostle Peter alone, by himself, though at what place there is no intimation. Nor are we certain of the time of it, any further than that it happened before the evening of the day on which our LORD arose. This appearance is mentioned by St Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 5. as his first proof of CHRIST's resurrection. And it was certainly a great condescension in JESUS, to vouchsafe this favour to Peter before all the other Apostles, considering his late shameful denial of him. But our gracious SAVIOUR, know-
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^a Mark xvi. 10, 11.

Luke xxiv. 11.

ing the temper of the man, regarded his necessities rather than his merits. For the same reason, Peter is marked particularly among those to whom the women were directed to carry the news of CHRIST's resurrection^f. This Apostle having seen his Divine Master alive from the dead, immediately communicated the intelligence to his brethren, with whom his testimony had much more weight than that of the women formerly given.

THE third appearance of JESUS after his resurrection, was to two of his Disciples going to Emmaus, who had been in the Apostles company at Jerusalem when the women made their report of Christ's resurrection to them. This is briefly mentioned by St Mark, chap. xvi. 12, 13. and related in a very circumstantial and affecting manner by St Luke, chap. xxiv. 13,—33. To these two Disciples JESUS did not discover himself all at once; but gradually prepared them for the joyful discovery, by entering into conversation with them, and explaining to them the prophecies which foretold the sufferings of the Messiah. At the end of their journey, having consented to go into a house with them, and sit down to meat, he made himself fully
known

^f Mark xvi. 7.

known to them, and then suddenly left them. It is true these Disciples, in their discourse with him, giving an account of the report of the women^s, mention only a vision of Angels alledged to have been seen by them, and say nothing of the appearance of JESUS to them. But their omitting that circumstance, though known to them as well as the other, is easily accounted for by the little regard or credit which they and their company had paid to the said report when made to them. They did not think his appearance to the women worth mentioning, since he had not appeared to Peter and John when they visited the sepulchre. These two Disciples set out for Jerusalem immediately after JESUS parted from them; and upon their return thither, they found the eleven Apostles and others gathered together, who said to them, *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon^s*. Such was the declaration of most of the company; but it is to be understood with an exception of some of them who still had their doubts^v even after these disciples had joined their suffrage to the fact, by relating the story of his interview with them. Some remained unconvinced by the united testimonies of the women, of Peter, and of the two Disciples of

^s Luke xxiv. 22, 23. ^v Verse 34. ^v Mark xvi. 13.

of Emmaus ; which is not surprising, since Thomas refused to believe after these testimonies were corroborated by that of all his fellow apostles.

NOR are these the only instances recorded, in which JESUS shewed himself alive to his friends on the very day of his resurrection. He was pleased, before the close of that memorable day, to visit the Apostles, and others assembled with them, in an apartment in Jerusalem, with the doors shut on them for fear of the Jews. Only the Apostle Thomas, upon some account or other, was not present at this meeting. The rest had reason to be well prepared for it, by the successive reports and testimonies before mentioned. Nevertheless, his sudden and unexpected appearance among them, and his opening the door, though probably bolted in the inside, excited at first great surprise and fear in them, and made some of them suspect that it was a Spirit they saw. But JESUS soon dispelled their doubts and fears, and gave them the fullest assurance that it was He Himself, by speaking to them, and reproving their incredulity ; by condescending to shew them his hands, his feet, and his side, still bearing the marks of the wounds they had received ; and by taking meat with them,

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for it was supper-time: After which, he encouraged the timorous Apostles, explained to them the reason of his sufferings, from the ancient Scriptures; reminding them also of what they had heard from him upon that subject before his death; and finally, he restored them to all the rights and honours of their office, which by their late cowardly behaviour they seemed to have forfeited, and in their own minds, it is probable, had absolutely given up *.

ALL the manifestations of JESUS hitherto mentioned, were on the same day that he rose from the dead.—The next appearance of his that is recorded, was eight days after the one last mentioned, and to all the Apostles, Thomas being with them. This seems to have been designed especially for his conviction, who had shewn a more obstinate incredulity than any of the rest; and it is accurately related John xx. 25,—29. Upon occasion of the obstinacy of this Apostle, our LORD uttered that admirable saying concerning religious faith, which teaches his followers in all ages, how they may obtain a greater happiness than those who conversed with him on earth, or even than those who were the witnesses of his resurrection, viz. if they come

* Mark xvi. 14. Luke xxiv. 36,—49. John xx. 19,—24.

come to the belief of the same truth, with more attention and candour in weighing the evidences of it:—*Thomas*, said he, *because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* Thomas yielded at last to an evidence more than sufficient to convince any rational and well-disposed mind, and confessed with exultation and rapture, that his Divine Master was risen from the dead: *My Lord! and my God!*—I shall only add, that the success of this interview affords the Ministers of Religion a lesson of patience and good hope in their treatment of sinners; that they ought not to give them up after failing in the first attempt to convert them, but to renew their endeavours again and again, because if truth be not admitted one day, it may another.

THUS our LORD, having promised to shew himself to his Apostles and other Disciples only in Galilee, and appointed to meet with them there, was pleased to do more than he promised. For, before they left Jerusalem, he shewed himself to one or more of them at five different times; of which two appearances were to the Apostles and others in a body, when he conversed with them, instructed and comforted them at considerable length, and gave them every evidence
of

of his resurrection, which the most scrupulous could desire.

BUT their minds being now well established in the belief of this great fact, they all set out for their own country of Galilee: And the next time that our LORD appeared, was at the sea of Tiberias in that country, to some of his disciples while they were fishing, *namely*, Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, the two sons of Zebedee, and two others whose names are not mentioned, being seven in number. Upon this occasion, JESUS gave them new proofs of that miraculous power which they had often seen him exert before his death. He enabled them to take a prodigious draught of fishes, provided a repast for them, shared with them in it, and held a long and edifying conversation, particularly addressed to Peter, in the presence of the rest, which, with the whole passage now referred to, is preserved to us, John xxi. 1,—24. St John calls this *the third time that JESUS shewed himself to his Disciples*[†]; and the third time it certainly was that he appeared to any considerable number of them together, of which the same Apostle had related two before: Or, it was the third if you reckon by days, the first four appearances being all on the day of his resurrection.

[†] John xxi. 14.

resurrection. But it was at least the sixth time that our SAVIOUR had manifested himself as risen, to one or more of his followers.

HIS seventh appearance, according to our reckoning, and the most public and solemn of all others, was on a mountain in Galilee, by previous appointment both of the time and place ; which being signified to his friends and followers, who were most numerous in that country, they flocked to it from all quarters. And here were present, including the eleven Apostles, upwards of five hundred Brethren ; of whom, though some had doubted before, and others, who now saw him for the first time, could scarce trust their own eyes, and were afraid to give too hastily into the belief of an event so full of wonder and joy^a ; yet they all at length attained the most certain persuasion of it, and worshipped JESUS as their Lord and Saviour, now risen to endless life and glory^a.

AFTER this, JESUS vouchsafed a separate manifestation of himself to the eyes of the Apostle James. But of the place, occasion, and circumstances of this appearance, we have nowhere any account. It is however mentioned in this order by the Apostle Paul^b.

THE

^a Luke xxiv. 41. ^a Matth. xxviii, 16, 17. 1 Cor. xv. 6.

^b 1 Cor. xv. 7.

THE ninth and last appearance of JESUS on earth, previous to his ascension, was to the eleven Apostles at Jerusalem; when he went with them to a part of the Mount of Olives near Bethany; and having given them what farther instructions were needful, and left them his last solemn benediction, he was parted from them in a gentle and leisurely manner, and ascended up into Heaven, before their wondering eyes^c.

ALL these separate interviews are distinctly recorded in one place or other of the New Testament. But, from the mention of these, we cannot certainly conclude that they were the only ones which happened: there may have been many more. Some others are not obscurely hinted. For example, our LORD gave the women to whom he first appeared, reason to expect that they should have the satisfaction to see him again, and more at leisure, before he ascended to his Father. And if we were to consult the affections of nature and friendship, we should suppose that he did not deny his Blessed Mother the consolation of seeing him risen, who had suffered so much at his crucifixion: that he granted the same favour to his friend Lazarus and sisters, a family so much endeared
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^c Luke xxiv. 50, 51. Acts i. 9.

to him; and finally, that Joseph and Nicodemus were permitted to share in that high pleasure, who took such a respectful care of his funeral. It is not recorded of the female company, that they saw him again, nor of the others, that they saw him at all, after his resurrection; which yet we naturally expect, and would fain suppose them to have done. But we must not indulge suppositions and conjectures, without scriptural authority.

THE Sacred Historians confine themselves to what they judged sufficient for the confirmation of our faith. To the Apostles, the chosen witnesses of CHRIST's resurrection^d, and upon whose testimony the christian world relies, it was requisite that this great fact should be fully ascertained; and to them *he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, during a space of forty days*^e: Whereby, notwithstanding all their doubts and difficulties, he wrought such a deep impression of it in their minds, that they did ever after, with undaunted resolution, publish and attest it before all men, and willingly laid down their lives rather than deny or conceal it.

JESUS did not indeed remain constantly with his Apostles, in the interval between

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his

^d Acts x. 41.

^e Acts i. 3.

his resurrection and ascension, as he had done before his passion. He was now no more in the state of mortality ; and it was fit he should wean them by degrees from their fond attachment to his person, and accustom them to bear his bodily absence, before he should take a final leave of them. He appeared, and disappeared to them, therefore, at proper intervals ; and besides giving them convincing tokens of his resurrection, he instructed and comforted them with his usual tenderness, and gently removed their prejudices in relation to his recent abasement and ignominious sufferings, by shewing them from the Scriptures, that it behoved the Messiah to suffer such things, which were no other than what he had also warned them of before. At the same time, he rectified their mistaken notions concerning the nature of his kingdom, and endeavoured to raise their views and desires to heavenly things. And having renewed their commission, in the most ample manner, to preach repentance and the remission of sins in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, he ordained the solemn rite of baptism to be administered by them to all the members of his church, at their entrance into it ; and, in conclusion, assured them of effectual assistance from above, in executing
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the very difficult and dangerous duties of the office to which he had called them.

THESE were the subjects of his last conversations with the Apostles, who, after seeing him ascend into Heaven, returned to Jerusalem, and waited there, according to his direction, until they received a plentiful effusion of Divine gifts and powers, which had been formerly promised them. In consequence of which, they immediately entered on the execution of their arduous work, and prosecuted it with a success answerable to the many demonstrations they were enabled to give of a supernatural wisdom and power attending them. They published every where the strange and unheard of doctrine of a CRUCIFIED SAVIOUR; and planted it, notwithstanding great and violent opposition, on the ruins of long established idolatry and superstition.

P A R T II.

The Doctrine of CHRIST's Death.

IN the former part of this Essay, we have stated at great length, the *fact*, or history of CHRIST's death; and have been led, by the interesting nature and important uses of the subject, to enlarge on it more than was at first intended. But, beside the immediate benefit flowing from a serious attention to so instructing an event, with its previous and subsequent circumstances; the ample view which we have taken of it, will enable us, I trust, to proceed with more advantage, in considering the *doctrine* relating to it, as set forth in the New Testament, or its beneficial effects and consequences with regard to us, which, through the help of GOD! we now propose to do.

THE salvation of sinners by CHRIST, refers directly to two things, which are very distinguishable in themselves, though they have an essential connection with one another, namely, the *depravity*, and the *guilt* of sin, or what is often called its reigning and con-

demning power. From both these, it was the design of GOD, and of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, by his death, to save us: from the former, by bringing us to true repentance, or persuading us to forsake all iniquity, and to lead a new life of holiness and righteousness; and from the latter, by averting the punishment due to our past sins, and conferring on us the rewards of innocence. And in both these respects, JESUS fulfilled the ancient prophecies relating to the Messiah. With regard to the remission of our sins, or the taking away the guilt of them, it was foretold, that he should be not only a King, but a Priest, *a Priest upon his throne^a, a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedeck^b*; that he should *bear the sin of many, and make intercession for the transgressors^c*, and *reconciliation for iniquity^d*. The other benefit, the reformation of our lives by him, is spoken of in innumerable places^e. Both of them are often intimated together^f. And in them are comprehended all the good tidings which were published to the world in and by him, and all the benefits mankind derive from his mediation. Indeed they include, when taken together, all that is desirable to a sinner, as such.

^a Zech. vi. 13.^b Psal. cx. 4.^c Isa. liii. 12.^d Dan. ix. 24.^e Isa. ii. 3. Ezek. xxxiv. 22, &c.^f Zech. xiii. 1. Jer. xxxi. 31,—34. Ezek. xxxvi. 25,—29.

such. What more can he wish for, than to be delivered both from the slavery of sin for the future, and from the condemnation he is liable to for his past sins? And what can be wanting to him, when, being reclaimed to the practice of his duty, and restored to the favour of GOD, he is put in possession of his proper happiness, the highest happiness of which his nature is capable?

MOREOVER, it is evident, that of these two great benefits, the one is purely the effect of divine grace, the work of GOD and our SAVIOUR, wherein we can directly have no share. In the other, it is necessary that our endeavours concur with the Grace of Heaven, and that our cares and labours be joined to those of our Redeemer, otherwise it will never be accomplished. We are not able, by any power of ours, to open the prison of the grave, to disengage ourselves from death, the wages of sin, and seize on eternal life. This is the gift of GOD, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST. But, in obedience to the command of CHRIST, and by his assistance, we can *repent, and believe the Gospel^a; put off the old man, and put on the new^b*; and do such other things as are requisite towards our sanctification, without which it would have been in vain to command them.

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THAT

^a Mark i. 15.

^b Eph. iv. 22.

THAT the death, or blood of CHRIST, is represented in Scripture as having a mighty tendency to save us, both from the practice of our sins, and from the punishment due to them, I shall not stop to prove; because, without any direct proof, it will be abundantly manifest of itself, in the sequel of our discourse; wherein, with all humility and reverence, and with a view to promote christian holiness and peace, I propose to enquire what the Scriptures have taught concerning the efficacy of CHRIST's blood towards the removal of each of these formidable evils. Though distinct in themselves, they are, as we have said, inseparably connected, or will be found so in the final issue of things: that is, wherever the depravity of sin remains more or less, there will also proportionally remain punishment and misery; and where the former is removed, the removal of the latter will assuredly follow. Again, though in the order of nature, the practice of sin must be forsaken, and its depravity in some measure corrected, before the sinner can enjoy the benefit of pardon; yet, in explaining the effects of CHRIST's blood with regard to each of these, it is proper to begin with the latter, which depends wholly upon God; because from thence may be drawn a powerful motive to excite
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our zeal and industry for accomplishing the former, which dependeth partly on ourselves. For, in the dispensation of grace, as well as of nature, GOD is the first mover. His goodness precedes our innocence, and leads us to repentance when we have sinned; yet, previous to repentance, no sinner is pardoned, nor is it fit he should. Thus, among men, a rebel must lay down his arms, and return to his duty, before he can receive an actual pardon, or be restored to the privileges of a good subject; but a proclamation of indemnity for past offences, issued by his Prince, serves as a strong motive to disarm him, and reduce him to a willing obedience.

THIS *second* part of our Essay, then, will consist of two chapters. In the *first*, we propose to consider the effect of CHRIST's death, as it relates to the expiation of the guilt, or taking away the punishment of sin. In the *second*, to consider the same event, as it tends to remove the depravity, corruption, or moral defilement of sin.—And GOD grant, that what shall be said on both these heads, may be agreeable to the truth, which is after godliness¹, and may serve to promote the great end of our SAVIOUR's passion, by making us die to sin, and live to righteousness!

CHAP. I.

¹ Titus i. 1.

CHAPTER I.

WE are first to enquire how the death of CHRIST, or the effusion of his blood, tends to put away the guilt of sin, or to save us from the punishment and condemnation which it deserves.—And upon this point, without pretending to enumerate all the reasons which have been, or even which may with propriety be advanced, I beg leave to propound and illustrate the four following observations, hoping that they will appear to be well founded, and instructive in christian piety.

FIRST, That the death of CHRIST derived all its merit and efficacy from its being subservient to the plan of Divine wisdom and goodness for promoting the true happiness of man.

SECONDLY, That the perfect obedience of CHRIST in his death, being so highly acceptable to God his Father, was by him very wisely made one reason for extending mercy to persons not otherwise entitled to it; or for granting sinners the means of repentance, and the benefit of pardon when those means should prove successful.

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY, That in reward of CHRIST's righteousness and obedience unto death, God did further invest him with the glorious power of calling sinners to repentance, of forgiving their sins when penitent, and of raising them from the dead to eternal life, as well as of punishing the obstinately disobedient.

LASTLY, That in CHRIST's death, we have the strongest security given us for the vouchsafement of pardon to penitent sinners, and the full accomplishment of all Gospel promises and threatenings, even the whole Covenant on God's part thus sealed with the blood of his only SON.

To one or other of these heads, I apprehend, may be reduced the most material things which are taught in Scripture upon this important point; and if they be well understood and considered, they will, by the blessing of God, lead us so far to just sentiments and useful lessons concerning it. We shall endeavour to explain them separately, in so many distinct Sections.

SECT. I.

S E C T. I.

OUR first observation is, That the death of JESUS CHRIST derived all its merit and efficacy from its being subservient to the plan of Divine wisdom and goodness for promoting the chief happiness of man.

IN order to illustrate this proposition, we must *first* enquire what the original plan of GOD was, respecting the human race. *2dly*, How, and in what sense the death of CHRIST was agreeable or subservient to it: And from thence we shall see, that the meritorious efficacy of his death depended wholly on that circumstance.—As to the first of these:

I. *All things are of God*, says the Apostle^a. *To him are known all his works from the beginning of the world*^b: and they are accomplished in their proper order, and time, according to a certain plan previously formed and decreed in the mind of God, and called in Scripture *the counsel of his will*^c; of which we can know nothing till it be revealed to us. Only, in every wise plan, and in this more especially, by the gradual unfolding of it,
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^a 2 Cor. v. 18.^b Acts xv. 18.^c Eph. i. 11.

we know that what is last in the execution, and what exists latest in the order of time, was first in the design, being the end aimed at by all the previous steps. Just as in human things, the whole fabric of a house, with all its apartments and accommodations, stands complete in the mind of a skilful architect, before the first stone of it is laid.

WE conclude with high probability from the best principles of natural reason, but from the discoveries of divine revelation we know of a truth, that the amiable attribute of goodness predominates in the Supreme Being, and is limited in its exercise by nothing but unerring wisdom and rectitude. *God is love*^d. No other motive can be conceived, so worthy of GOD, for creating the world, and the different ranks of creatures in it, as goodness, or a desire of communicating happiness. *Thou art worthy, O Lord! to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure (or because of thy will) they are and were created*^e; 'They owe their existence to thy free goodness.'

IN creating the race of men, therefore, GOD, according to his goodness, designed them

^d 1 John iv. 8.

^e Rev. iv. 11.

them for happiness—happiness without end : not absolutely however, and infallibly, without any care on their part ; but in consequence of the right exercise of their rational powers, their free choice, and faithful endeavours, by the practice of true piety and virtue, and a steadfast adherence thereto, amidst all the temptations incident to their state : He being willing to overlook involuntary frailties, and smaller blemishes, and even to allow the benefit of repentance in case of wilful sins ; but determined to punish with everlasting destruction, the obstinately wicked and impenitent. In this way, we are taught to hope for salvation, by the Gospel ; and none of our kind, strictly speaking, could ever be saved on any other terms. That a frail and fallible creature, such as man is in his best estate, endowed with animal passions as well as reason, and allied, by the constitution of his nature, both to Angels, and to brutes, should be able to secure his happiness for ever, by his own perfect obedience ; He who made him, knew it to be impossible. At the same time his law, which is the law of eternal rectitude and truth, could not in the nature of the thing, require less of man as the rule of his conduct ; that is, it could not permit him to neglect or violate his duty in any instance or degree, without becoming
liable

liable to punishment, and forfeiting some portion of his happiness. Besides, it was fit that man should have the highest standard of perfection before his eyes, that he might incessantly aspire after it, and that, knowing the extent of his obligations, he might be the more sensible of his weakness when he failed, and his need of the allowances of mercy. Nor could he sustain any hurt by trying his own strength in this way to the utmost, and endeavouring to gain eternal life, if he could, merely by his own obedience, without the assistance of a Mediator.

ACCORDINGLY our sacred history informs us, that the first parents of the human race were placed in very happy circumstances, which nothing but sin, or disobedience to their Creator, could alter for the worse; the penalty of death being threatened only for their disobeying the clear and easy command which God gave them: *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*^f;—a plain intimation that man was originally designed for immortality. And thus the Apostle Paul declares, that *death entered into the world by sin*^g; so that, without sin going before, it would not have been permitted to enter among men, being *the wages of sin*^h, and what

^f Gen. ii. 17.

^g Rom. v. 12.

^h Chap. vi. 23.

what sin alone gives birth to¹. As also, says an apocryphal but wise author, *God made not death; but ungodly men with their works called it to them*². Nevertheless, the kind intentions of the Creator towards man, could not be frustrated by the sin of our first parents, however great and aggravated, since he foresaw, and had provided a remedy for it before he gave them a being. They indeed from that moment became subject to inevitable death, with all their posterity. But it was the good pleasure of Almighty GOD, that this death should not be eternal, as the rigour of the law required it to be, but only temporary: that mankind should be delivered from it by a resurrection, and restored to a capacity of enjoying immortal happiness, of which they should in due time be put in the actual possession, if they sought it by sincere repentance, and a patient continuance in well-doing, though attended with imperfections; and for this purpose, he appointed a Redeemer, before the world was made.

AGREEABLY to this account, we find, that the righteous shall, at the great day of final retribution, be invited into *the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world*³. And CHRIST himself, the Saviour, though he

¹ James i. 15. ² Wisd. of Sol. i. 13,—16. ³ Matth. xxv. 34.

he was not manifested till the last times, *was verily fore-ordained before the foundation of the world*^m. Eternal life through him, was what *God that cannot lie, promised (i. e. decreed to promise) before the world began*ⁿ. In him *God chose us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love*^o. And the Gospel is *the revelation of a mystery which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*^p. In short, *God hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*^q.—From these, and other like passages, it appears, that the gracious purpose of our salvation by CHRIST, was formed in the mind of GOD before any of our race received a being. In perfect goodness and wisdom it was at first freely devised, and in due time manifested, by him *who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*^r.—And thus much concerning the original plan of GOD, so far as it is clearly revealed to us, respecting the human race.

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II. WE

^m 1 Peter i. 20.ⁿ Titus i. 2.^o Eph. i. 4.^p Eph. iii. 9,—11.^q 2 Tim. i. 9.^r Eph. i. 11.

II. WE are next to enquire, how the sufferings and death of CHRIST were subservient to it?—Whatever end is proposed by Infinite Wisdom, it may be taken for granted, that the most fit and proper means are appointed for accomplishing the same. In the present case, the end proposed was the salvation of the human race, or at least of great numbers of them, in the way of piety and righteousness, none being excluded from the benefit but such as should, by their obstinacy in sin, exclude themselves; and among the means for accomplishing this end, were the humiliations and crucifixion of CHRIST.

As GOD has no pleasure in the misery of any man, even the meanest and most unworthy^f, we may well believe it was not his will that CHRIST should suffer death and other afflictions, merely for the sake of the pain attending them. Had that been so, the cruel infliction, and the patient enduring of them, must have been equally agreeable to his will. But much rather surely would the Eternal Father have spared his dear Son the pains of the cross, if the great designs of his mercy toward men could have been, all circumstances considered, as well accomplished without them. And in fact the difficulty, or reluctance,

^f Lam. iii. 33. Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

luctance, if we may say so, of giving up so excellent a Person to such cruel sufferings, though but for a short time, is what chiefly recommends and enhances the Father's love to us in the work of our redemption. Nor have we any reason to think that these designs of love would have been frustrated, if the Jews had been less wicked than they were when our SAVIOUR lived among them, and more disposed to do their duty. Had they received JESUS with the respect and submission due to the Messiah, as they ought to have done, it is certain he would not have suffered at their hands in the manner he did; and who will say that he would have been thereby prevented from being a Saviour to them, and to the rest of mankind? But it is more wonderful on the other hand, that the glorious purposes of Divine mercy were not to be defeated, though the Jews should not do their duty, as in fact they did not, but acted in the highest opposition to it. GOD permitted a degenerate people, whose minds were prepossessed with inveterate prejudices, to contrive and effectuate the temporal destruction of that chosen favourite of his, whom he sent to be their deliverer; wherein they acted according to the bent of their own evil hearts: but he did not permit their wickedness to frustrate his grace and kindness to-

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ward

ward man. On the contrary, he brought good out of their evil, and rendered their crimes subservient to the purposes of his own holiness and mercy. Foreseeing these crimes, and resolving to permit them like any other wicked actions, he caused the sufferings of CHRIST, which were the bitter fruits of them, to be foretold by his servants the Prophets; and these prophecies the Jews fulfilled without any intention of doing so, by only following blindfold the dictates of their own vicious passions and prejudices. So the Apostle Peter declares in his first address to them after CHRIST's ascension: *Him being delivered, says he, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain.*

UPON the whole, to suffer many indignities in the world, and to die on a cross, were not the chief and ultimate * ends of our SAVIOUR's mission, nor any direct ends of it at all, but only incidental calamities, which could not fail to come upon him in discharging the duties of his mission faithfully, amidst an evil and adulterous generation.

* Acts ii. 23.

* See the Apology of Benjabin Mordecai, a learned and ingenious author, to whom I do with pleasure confess myself much indebted, and with whom I have found it necessary to coincide in many things. Lett. v. and vi.

tion. The direct and immediate end of his mission, was to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, or reveal the Will of God; to confirm his doctrine by proper evidences; to set an example of what he taught; and in short, to promote the salvation of sinners in the most effectual manner, whatever sufferings the doing so might bring upon him, and though it should cost him his life. This was the will of God with regard to him, and the work which he had given him to do. JESUS was ordained to persist with an undaunted resolution, to publish the doctrine of salvation, and assert his title to the character of MESSIAH, because it did truly belong to him; and finally, to bear the consequences which would follow such proceedings, through the envy and malice of wicked men. Thus his cross and all his sufferings were allotted to him, not for their own sake, but for the sake of something else in itself pleasing to God, who intended thereby to make him perfect, and by his means to bring many sons unto glory. On these terms JESUS had *received a commandment to lay down his life*^u. The torments of the cross were a cup given him by his Father, in drinking whereof, he acted according to his Father's will, and performed an act of obedience to

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him;

^u John x. 18.

him ; which, though noble and heroic in the highest degree, was nothing more than what fidelity to his office, in the circumstances wherein he was placed, rendered indispensably necessary. *God was able to save him from death*^v, in the last extremity ; and JESUS himself supposes, that his being saved from it, was not absolutely inconsistent with the salvation of men, when he prays in these terms, *Abba ! Father ! All things are possible unto Thee ; take away this cup from me*^w. Yet seeing it was the will of the Father that he should submit to it, we might safely conclude, though we saw no other reason for it, that it was the way of all others most fit and proper for bringing about the end in view. And hence we may perceive, as proposed,

III. To enquire, in the *third* and *last* place upon this point, what it was that gave such merit and efficacy to the death of JESUS CHRIST.—To which we must answer, that it was its being so agreeable to the will of GOD, and so requisite for accomplishing his benevolent designs in behalf of men. Had it not been for this, the greatest of his sufferings and performances would have yielded no advantage either to himself, or
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^v Heb. v. 7.^w Mark xiv. 36.

to us. It was GOD that raised him up, and endowed him with all his offices, gifts, and powers^x, to act for our salvation. JESUS assumed no honour to himself, but in consequence of the Divine vocation. Though no stranger even from his early years^y to the great work he was destined for on earth, he did not hastily or prematurely engage in it, but remained in humble obscurity at Nazareth, till the time arrived that GOD should send him forth. When he manifested himself publicly, it was in the name and authority of his Father^z, and with a constant avowal that he came from him to do his will^a. His doctrine, he declared, was not his own, but his who sent him^b; and he spake not of himself, but as the Father taught him^c. In like manner, his miracles or mighty works were done by the Father, who dwelt in him^d, even by the Spirit and Finger of GOD^e; and of himself he did nothing^f. And not only by his preaching and miracles, but by every part of his conduct, he glorified the Father, and finished the work which he had given him to do^g. Particularly in the sufferings endured by him,

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^x Acts ii. 36. Chap. iii. 22. Luke iv. 18. Heb. v. 4, 5.
^y Luke ii. 49. ^z John v. 49. ^a Verse 30. Chap. vi. 38.
 Chap. iv. 34. ^b John xiv. 24. ^c Chap. viii. 28. Verse 26.
 Chap. xii. 49. ^d John xiv. 10. ^e Matth. xii. 28.
 Luke xi. 20. ^f John viii. 28. ^g John xvii. 4.

he followed exactly the Father's instructions. For he did not court affliction, as some mistaken men have done, or plunge himself into it rashly, and without cause. He gave no unnecessary provocation to his enemies. He rebuked their vices, and bore witness to the truth, as the duty of his ministry required him to do; and when that excited their malice, he avoided its effects on several occasions, and did not deliver himself up into their hands till his *hour was come*; that is, till he had performed every thing necessary to be done by himself in person, for manifesting and confirming his heavenly mission. Then he embraced the cross, not without a natural reluctance indeed, but at the same time with a determined resolution to fulfil the Father's will, and to *be faithful in all things to him that appointed him^b*. And as his whole life was a sacrifice of duty and obedience to the Father, so in an especial manner was his death; for, *he did always those things that pleased himⁱ; he kept his commandments, and abode in his love^k; and his Father loved him, because he laid down his life that he might take it up again^l*.—Now these things may suffice for illustrating the first proposition above mentioned; and from them we may learn,

I. THAT

^b Heb. iii. 2. ⁱ John viii. 29. ^k Chap. xv. 10. ^l Chap. x. 17.

1. THAT the free and essential goodness of GOD, was the source of our salvation by CHRIST, as well as of our first creation. Had not GOD been good, we should never have received a being; and had he not been gracious and compassionate, he would never have continued our race, far less restored us to the hope of everlasting happiness, after we had, by our disobedience, forfeited all pretensions to it. And what was it but his own goodness and grace that moved him, before our creation, to provide a remedy for us, when we should have exposed ourselves to the just penalties of his holy law? It has been said, that the death of CHRIST was the ground of the divine mercy; but it may be more truly said, that the divine mercy was the ground and reason of it. Let GOD's eternal goodness be for ever celebrated; for, *of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever, Amen^m.*

2. WE may learn further from the doctrine above explained, that it is obedience and submission to the will of GOD which can alone conduce to our moral perfection, and our supreme happiness. We have each of us our place and sphere of action marked out to us by the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and

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^m Rom. xi. 36.

a work given us to do, as our Blessed SAVIOUR had. There are many who live in the world only to themselves, without any regard to the divine will. *God is not in all their thoughts*". There are others who have seen fit to devise religious observances for themselves, beyond GOD's will, and without any authority from him, though with a view no doubt to gain a greater share of his favour. But, *who hath required this at your hands*? saith the LORD. 'Did ye these things at all unto me? They were singular, it may be, and splendid, and attracted the notice and applause of men; but were they really good and dutiful?' These questions should be answered by us coolly, and to the satisfaction of our own consciences: For whatever we do or suffer in religion, for our own pleasure merely, and out of that order and subordination which GOD hath prescribed to us, is not only vain and useless, but hurtful. To expose ourselves to trials, or endure afflictions which we can innocently avoid, he does not require us. If we do such things notwithstanding, it is will-worship and self-seeking, which can yield us nothing but greater disgrace and misery. But a steady adherence to GOD's will in the practice of goodness and righteousness, as taught in his law,

* Psal. x. 4.

° Isa. i. 12.

law, this he peremptorily requires, though it should cost us every thing else that is dear to us, not excepting our lives; and without this, he will never own us for his children.— It may be inferred from what has been said,

3. IN the *third* place, that it never was the intention of Almighty God to save men by what is called a covenant of works, without grace; and for this plain reason, because the thing is impracticable for such creatures as we are. By it our first parents themselves were not saved. If we could have attained to eternal happiness by our own perfect obedience to the law of God, there would have been no need of the death or mediation of CHRIST; as the Apostle says, *If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain*^p. The law of God cannot exact less from a reasonable and moral creature, than perfect obedience; nor allow of any transgression; of which, in every instance, death is the penalty. But the Supreme Lawgiver determined from the beginning, to mitigate in our favour^q the rigour of law^{*}; to make allowance for human error and imperfection, and

^p Gal. ii. 21.

^q Psal. ciii. 13, 14.

* ‘ God abates of his own right, that the condition of
‘ man may not be forlorn. Where there is a right, there is
‘ a power to moderate and abate of that right, yea to part
‘ with

and to accept of repentance and sincere obedience, instead of sinless perfection. This was always God's method of saving men, though the Gospel alone hath clearly revealed it. 'By the doctrine of the New Testament, says Mr Locke†, there is one and the same rule of rectitude set to the actions of all mankind, Jews, Gentiles, and Christians; and the failing of a complete obedience to it, in every tittle, makes a man unrighteous, the consequence of which is death. But all shall be saved from death who believe in JESUS CHRIST, and sincerely endeavour after righteousness, tho' they do not attain unto it, their faith being accounted to them for righteousness.' Rom. iii. 19,—24.

4. I only add one thing more upon the point before us, which is, That the indulgent goodness of GOD, now mentioned, is not designed to furnish a pretext for our remissness and sloth, much less to encourage us in sin. It can have no such effect on any upright and ingenuous mind, or any mind that is not already much depraved. We are capable, by proper

'with it, if we please. Any man may take less than his right, may pardon upon any satisfaction, upon no satisfaction. We all say we have this right, and will we deny it to God?' *Whichcol's Aphorisms.*

† See his Note on Rom. ii. 26.

proper exertions, of making proficiency in virtue and goodness; and while we keep the highest standard of perfection in our view, and aim at it continually, we shall attain to greater excellence than we could have done by forming ourselves upon a more imperfect model. It should be our care to avoid sin in every kind and degree; or if we are overtaken with a fault, more or less, to recover ourselves from it as speedily as possible. Our noble ambition should be, not only to do good works, but to abound therein; to *stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*^{*}, and to have our hearts established unblameable in holiness before him[†]. The Law of GOD never appeared in so great purity and perfection, as it does in the Gospel of his Grace; where we are taught, that for every degree of goodness which we attain, there is prepared a suitable degree of glory and happiness; and every transgression and disobedience also, shall receive a just recompence of reward. Without a faithful endeavour to fulfil GOD's Law in its utmost extent, we cannot approve ourselves sincere in his service; but with it, though we have come short and offended in many things, he will graciously account and treat us as *holy and unblameable, and irreproveable in his sight*[‡].

* Such,

* Col. iv. 12.

† 1 Theff. iii. 13.

‡ Col. i. 22.

‘ Such, O LORD, may I thy servant zealous-
‘ ly strive to be!—and for that end, may I
‘ abide with thee, in every condition thou
‘ art pleased to assign me; never going out
‘ of thy way, either to shun afflictions, or
‘ to invite them. It was thus that thy dear
‘ Son proceeded here below, in fulfilling
‘ the eternal purposes of thy mercy toward
‘ men: thus he lived, and laboured, and
‘ suffered, and died; and it is only by con-
‘ curring in the same heavenly designs, ac-
‘ cording to the grace given unto me, that
‘ I can hope, or that I desire, to find at
‘ length, through him, a welcome entrance
‘ into the kingdom, which Thou, O bounti-
‘ ful Author of my being! hast prepared for
‘ good men, from the foundation of the
‘ world. Amen.

LET us now proceed to shew,

SECT. II.

SECTION II.

THAT the perfect obedience of CHRIST in his death, being so highly acceptable to GOD his Father, was by him very wisely made a reason for extending mercy to persons not otherwise entitled to it, or for granting sinners the means of repentance, and the benefit of pardon in every case wherein those means should prove successful.

WE have already seen, that the merit of all that CHRIST did and suffered for us on earth, arose from its being so entirely agreeable to the will of GOD, and subservient to the purposes of his goodness towards men. In this section we shall, I trust, be enabled to see, in part at least, how that merit redounds, through the mercy of GOD, to our good; and what benefits we do, or may receive from GOD, on account of the perfect obedience of his dear Son, and for his sake.

THAT men are capable of receiving good as well as evil, both in respect of their bodies and their souls, through the means of their fellow men, and on their account, is a matter of daily experience: Every one feels it, through the whole course of his life. Almighty

mighty GOD, who is invifible, over-rules and directs all things; but he generally employeth vifible agents in this world, to execute all his purpofes, whether of mercy, or of judgement. That he fhould fave men, therefore, by the Man CHRIST JESUS, is no way unfuitable to the eftablifhed order of his Providence; and yet this procedure, on which is founded the whole Gofpel, hath not efaped oppofition and censure among men. That the righteoufnefs and interceffion of JESUS CHRIST fhould procure any divine benefits to us, of which we are unworthy, hath been thought ftrange and unaccountable; and great objections have been raifed againft it, as inconfiftent with the Divine perfections and government: For thus they argue, ‘ If
‘ this or the other benefit be in itfelf fit to
‘ be granted, God will certainly grant it,
‘ without the righteoufnefs or interceffion of
‘ any one whatever; and if it be not fit to
‘ be granted, no credit or intereft which any
‘ being can have with God, will avail to obtain it.’ The argument has fome plaufibility in it, and deferves attention.

It highly concerns us to be perfuaded on good grounds, that GOD’s ways are equal; and it may help to fet this matter in a clear light, if we confider, *firft*, how the cafe
stands,

stands, according to Holy Scripture, with regard to ordinary men; and, *2dly*, how it stands with regard to our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I. LET us first consider the happy influence of true piety and virtue in ordinary men, for procuring divine blessings to others, as well as themselves, and to persons less worthy than they; a subject which will be very useful, both to *illustrate* the great christian doctrine concerning the merits and intercession of CHRIST, and to *confirm* the credibility of it, by shewing its analogy to what hath often happened, and does happen in the common course of Providence. Now, in handling this point, it will be proper, *first*, to ascertain the fact, that sinners often receive from God very valuable benefits, which would not otherwise be granted to them, on account of the righteousness of good men: *secondly*, to point out the bounds or limits of this grace; and, *thirdly*, to enquire into the moral purposes which are served by this procedure of Divine Providence. As to the first of these,

1st, WE may lay it down for a certain truth, that God Almighty always does what is fittest and best, neither inflicting punishment,

ment, nor conferring benefits, but where there is a proper reason for it. But there may be reasons for conferring benefits, besides the merit, or worth, or acceptableness of those who receive them; and very good reasons too: If there were not, what would become of mankind? To those who have transgressed the commandments of God, no benefits are due from him, strictly speaking, at all; such persons being vessels of wrath, rather than of mercy. If any benefits be granted to them, therefore, or if their day of grace be prolonged, it must be for some other reason than because they are worthy of them, or have acquired a right to them.—And for the chief and primary reason of granting benefits in these cases, we must look to the pure mercy and compassion of God, who is good to the evil and unthankful, and is not willing that any should perish. But another cause of them, through his gracious and wise appointment, may be the good behaviour of other persons some way allied to these offenders; which he is pleased to admit as a reason for bestowing on the latter, though ill deserving, all such favours as tend to reclaim them, to bring them to repentance, and render them objects of divine forgiveness.—And in this way, even those who prove finally impenitent, may be spared for a longer time,
and

and have ampler means of repentance allowed them, than was otherwise to be expected; by which, however, their impenitence, being persisted in, will be necessarily rendered more inexcusable.

It is not meant that the righteousness and obedience of good men can be in any case the only reason for God's shewing mercy to the unworthy, much less that it is needed to make him merciful; but only that it may be one reason or motive with him, for exercising, in particular cases, that mercy which is essential to his Being. If he were without mercy, nothing could prevail with him to be propitious to sinners, not even their deepest repentance. But placability and goodness*, which are the glory of his nature, a love of righteousness, and a desire of promoting it among men, may induce him, in the government of this world, to suffer even the imperfect virtue and holiness of some to redound to the good of others who are more deficient in these qualities, or destitute of them; and may be graciously and wisely sustained by him as a reason for extending

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kindness,

* ' If placability be an excellency here below, it is by derivation from above, is originally there, and so more abundantly : For, what is by imitation and participation, must be less where it is secondarily, than where it is primarily.' *Id. ibid.*

kindness, lenity, and forbearance towards them, in order to their amendment. But another, and a principal reason for such proceedings, is always his own goodness and mercy; for the sake of which, he bears with sinners, and shews them kindness, as well as for the sake of other persons more worthy than they. *'I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake,* said God to his ancient people, *and will not remember thy sins^a.*

BUT, however it be accounted for, we know certainly from many Scripture proofs and examples, that sinful men have often received very valuable benefits, which they had no title to on their own account, not only through the instrumentality, but on account of the virtue of others. Thus Laban the Syrian *learned by experience, that the Lord had blessed him for Jacob's sake^b.* And when Joseph was made overseer in the house of Potiphar, from that time forth *the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake^c.* When Solomon declined to idolatry in the latter part of his life, God threatened that he would rend the kingdom from him, and give it to his servant. *Nevertheless,* adds he, *in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake:*

^a Isa. xliii. 25.^b Gen. xxx. 27.^c Chap. xxxix. 5.

sake : but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit, I will not rend away all the kingdom : but will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen^d. In like manner, the ancient Israelites are often reminded by Moses, that God had so eminently distinguished them above all other people, not on account of their own righteousness, but for the love he bore to their illustrious ancestors^e. *Only the Lord had delight in thy Fathers*, says he, *to love them, and to choose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day^f*. And are we not all of us gainers at this day, by the faith and righteousness of Abraham, and the fulfilment of that grand promise, that *in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed^g*?

UPON the same principle is founded the efficacy of the prayers of good men, and of the intercessions which they offer up for sinners. When the Israelites murmured at the report of the spies sent to view the promised land, and God was provoked at them, Moses prayed for them, saying, *Pardon, O Lord, I beseech thee ! the iniquity of this people, according to thy great mercy, and as thou hast forgiven*

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^d 1 Kings xi. 12, 13. ^e Deut. ix. 4, &c. ^f Chap. x. 15.

^g Gen. xxii. 17, 18.

this people from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy wordⁿ. And when they had sinned in the affair of the golden calf, the same Mediator endeavoured by his intercession to make atonement for them, and in part succeededⁱ. He stood before him in the breach, says the Psalmist, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them^k. The prophet Samuel, at the request of the children of Israel, cried unto the LORD for them, when they were about to engage in battle with the Philistines, and the Lord heard him^l. And in the time of a great drought and scarcity in the land of Israel, Elijah prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit^m. So true it is, that the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth muchⁿ.

MANY other examples might be produced; but these are sufficient to shew that GOD is pleased to have respect unto the piety and obedience of his servants; and, on their account, to bestow, in many cases, important benefits on those who are yet in a state of enmity with him. But, so far is this from being wanted to give him a merciful disposition, or extorting from him the exercise of
mercy

ⁿ Numb. xiv. 19, 20. ⁱ Exod. xxxii. 30,—34. ^k Psal. cvi. 23.

^l 1 Sam. vii. 9.

^m 1 Kings xviii. 24.

ⁿ James v. 16.

mercy unwillingly, that nothing is more agreeable to him, than to find good men, who endeavour, by their intercessions with him, as well as other means, to stay the execution of his vengeance upon sinners. The Prophet Ezekiel represents him anxiously looking about for such men among a degenerate people, and much disappointed when they cannot be found. *I sought for a man among them, said God, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none*^o. What a lovely idea does this give us of our Almighty Governour! Truly the Lord is slow to anger, and of great mercy; loth to come to extremities even with his bitterest enemies, though he could crush them in a moment; and glad to lay hold on any plausible reason, if we may say so, for delaying judgement*, which is his *strange work*^p. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* said he with inimitable

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tender-

^o Ezek. xxii. 30.^p Isa. xxviii. 21.

* ‘ Punishment has in it the notion of a remedy, and has the place of a mean, not of an end. Now, as no more of a mean is to be designed than what is necessary to the end, and a mean is considerable only as it has relation to the end, therefore if the sinner repent, there can be no necessity for punishment, for the end is obtained without it; and there is nothing in punishment save as a mean, in which God can take content.’ *Whichet’s Aphorisms.*

tendernefs : *how fhall I deliver thee, Ifrael? how fhall I make thee as Admah? how fhall I fet thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together*^a. At the interceffion of Abraham, GOD was willing to fpare Sodom, if but ten righteous perfons could have been found in it^b. And in the cafe of Jerufalem, he comes ftill lower: *Run ye to and fro through the ftreets of Jerufalem, and fee now and know, and feek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgement, and feeketh the truth, and I will pardon it*^c. There are inftances too, where GOD having previously refolved to grant pardon to finners, doth yet direct them to feek it from him by the interceffions of good men, who were known to them; which was undoubtedly a powerful recommendation of fuch characters to their efteem and imitation. *He fhall pray for thee, and thou fhalt live*^d, faid GOD to Abimelech, fpeaking of Abraham. And to the friends of Job, *My fervant Job fhall pray for you; for him will I accept*^e.

IN fhort, it feems to be an eftablifhed rule of the divine government, to avert evils which are deferved, and confer bleffings on fuch as
are

^a Hof. xi. 8. ^b Gen. xviii. 32. ^c Jer. v. 1. ^d Gen. xx. 7.

^e J ob xlii. 8.

are less worthy and acceptable to GOD, partly at the instance and for the sake of those who are more in favour with him. And something very similar to this happens daily among men : For we often do a kindness to one, or forbear punishing him, not for his own sake, but for the sake of others with whom he is connected, and whom we esteem for their worth, or love for their friendship to us, or otherwise respect. So David spared Nabal, at the intercession of Abigail^v; and enquired if any was left of the house of Saul, that he might shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake^w; and conferred favours on Chimham, for the sake of his father Barzillai^x. And, says St Paul to the Corinthians, *If I forgave any thing—for your sakes forgave I it, in the sight of Christ^y*. When a poor man asks alms of you for the sake of GOD, or of CHRIST, he does not set himself forth as an object of your esteem, or even of your compassion considered in himself; but he addresses the principle of religion which he supposes to be in you, and endeavours to interest you in his favour from a regard to your Creator and Redeemer. Thus far for ascertaining the fact. But,

2dly,

^v 1 Sam. xxv. 32.

^w 2 Sam. ix. 1.

^x 2 Sam. xix. 38.

^y 2 Cor. ii. 10.

2dly, THIS grace of GOD, extended to the wicked for the sake of the righteous, hath certain bounds and limits assigned to it by infinite wisdom, beyond which it cannot go: For there are cases where the righteousness and prayers of good men, are not of any avail with GOD in behalf of sinners. Such was the case of the Sodomites when Abraham interceded for them: and such was the condition of Israel, when Ezekiel protested, *Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God*^a. The Israelites were then too corrupt and abominable to admit of any intercession in their behalf. So also GOD speaks to the Prophet Jeremiah, *Pray not for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, nor make intercession to me, for I will not bear thee*^a. And again, *Pray not for this people, for their good*^b. Nay, adds he, *Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people; cast them out of my sight*^c.

WHEN sinners remain obstinate and incorrigible in their evil ways, they cannot be benefited by any righteousness of others, or by any intercessions of the righteous in their behalf; because it is not fit or right in itself that

^a Ezek. xiv. 14. ^a Jer. vii. 16. ^b Chap. xiv. 11. ^c Chap. xv. 1.

that such should be pardoned, or always spared: it is inconsistent with wise and good government. And as above observed, no worth or intercession of any person whatever, can move GOD ALMIGHTY to do what is improper and unfit to be done; though it may induce him to grant benefits which are not due, and which, without such a reason for granting them, would have been withheld. The only instances in which good men can serve the bad, are either with regard to temporal things, or with regard to such spiritual benefits as tend to convert and reclaim them. But if they resist the means of grace, and frustrate all the endeavours which are used for bringing them to repentance, they must at length inevitably perish. In vain shall sinners who continue impenitent, rely on the merits and intercession of righteous men for their salvation. The terms of our acceptance with GOD, are fixed otherwise. It is the decree of Heaven, supremely wise and equitable, that *every man shall be judged at last according to his works*, and that *wrath shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil*^a. The Jews might persuade themselves, that having Abraham for their father, would excuse them from the duties of repentance^c; but it was a fatal error, vehemently combat-
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^a Rom. ii. 9.

^c Matth. iii.

ed and exposed, in their hearing, by the divine forerunner of our LORD. Says the Apostle John, *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask (or pray to God) and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death (that is, an obstinate, presumptuous, incurable sin) I do not say that he shall pray for it^f.* And why indeed should any one pray for the pardon of a sin which is persisted in, and not repented of? That would be to pray against a decree of GOD, known to be fixed and unalterable. But since it is not for us to know what particular sinners shall remain finally impenitent, we ought not to despair of those who may seem to be the most hardened, nor to forbear praying for them, unless forbidden by an extraordinary revelation. Who were ever more hardened to appearance, than the unbelieving Jews, in St Paul's time? Yet this great Apostle says, *My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved^g.* And as good men ought not to deny sinners the benefit of their prayers, that they may be brought to repentance, so they should along with this, use every other means in their power, like the same benevolent Apostle, for bringing them to repentance; this being the only radical cure of their misery, and the only

^f 1 John v. 16.

^g Rom. x. 1.

only effectual method to prevent their final condemnation.

3dly, If we now enquire into the ends and purposes which are served by this procedure of Divine Providence, we shall find them to be great and valuable, and altogether worthy of the righteous Governour of the universe. Some of them are these following :—

1. By this conduct, God appears in his glory, as *a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, as the friend and patron of virtue, which is thus shewn to be of all things the most precious in his eyes; since he makes even the imperfect virtue which is to be found among men, a source of blessedness, not to its immediate owners only, but to others also who are estranged from it. So much does he value it, and so desirous is he to promote it among men, that for its sake he bears long with the wickedness of the ungodly, and extends favour to them which they had no reason to expect. The happiness of its votaries he encreases, by suffering their piety to overflow to the good of all with whom they are connected, or for whom they interest themselves. He is pleased to accept of it at their hands, both on their own behalf, and in some sort too as the price of

of benefits bestowed on the undeserving. No sacrifice prevails with him like the obedience of his reasonable creatures. It is for the sake of the righteous that he preserves and governs the world : all events are overruled for their final happiness ; and to them the wicked, who often use them ill, are indebted under God, for the lengthening of their tranquillity, nay for their conversion and salvation, if ever they be happy enough to attain it. For,

2. ANOTHER advantage of this Divine procedure is, that by it sinners are often in fact converted, even great sinners ; and from being objects of wrath, become objects of mercy. And perhaps there are few, if any of the saints, who do not owe their salvation more or less to this grace. The best will most readily acknowledge their obligations to the Divine patience.—But as to sinners, the case is plain. God waits longer for their repentance, that he may be gracious to them ; and affords them more ample space and means for repentance, not because they merit such favour, but from his own compassion, and because they are connected with others better than themselves. And in order to promote their conversion, he allows them the benefit of the instructions, admonitions, examples,

examples, and intercessions of righteous men. And when these, or other means, prove effectual for the conversion of any one sinner, there is joy in Heaven, because a soul is saved from death. Further,

3. THIS method of Providence gives new life and vigour to the virtuous endeavours of good men, and mightily encourages them in all well-doing, that they may be more extensively useful, and procure more good to others as well as to themselves. The single virtue of benevolence or good will to our neighbour, if we have any share of it, doth thus become a motive to excell in every virtue, that it may obtain a higher gratification to itself, which it can only find in preventing the misery, or increasing the happiness of men. If you wish to be indeed a blessing to others, you must study to be acceptable to God, by having a due respect to all his commandments; and in vain do you profess to be a lover of mankind, and a friend to your country, while you are profane and irreligious, and undutiful to your Creator. You are more likely to bring misery on those who are near you, than to render them any real service.

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4. HENCE it follows, in the *fourth* place, that this is a noble way of producing worthy examples for the imitation of others, and setting those examples in a proper point of view ; since the best characters will thus be placed in the most conspicuous light, and endowed with the power of doing greater good : and every one who sees or hears of them, will be naturally disposed to emulate their virtues ; especially those who have experienced the happy effects of their benevolence. I only add further,

5. THAT this conduct of Providence serves to connect human society more closely together, and to increase among men the sense of mutual obligation and dependence ; for it is manifest that GOD intends us all to be instrumental in promoting the happiness of one another, not only by our charitable wishes, designs, and works, but likewise by our interest with Heaven, when we act worthily ; and therefore we are commanded to pray for Kings, and those in authority over us, for the Ministers of religion, for friends, for enemies, for all men. Sinners, in the time of their calamity, look up to the righteous as their saviours, and seek an interest in their prayers, when they cannot pray for themselves : And the righteous are either
successful

successful in promoting the conversion of sinners, or else have their own virtues purified and improved by the contradiction and ill usage they receive from them. Many are the advantages suited to a probationary state, which result both to the righteous and the wicked, from their living mingled together in society, as they do here below.

It is true, as sinners are greatly benefited in this world by means of the righteous, and for their sake; so it often happens likewise, that the innocent and virtuous suffer through the malignity of sinners, and on their account, and sometimes even in their stead. Not to speak of persecutions for righteousness sake, one great malefactor shall be capable of doing incredible mischief to a whole nation; and, till his crimes be expiated, many thousands shall suffer for his sake. Thus we read, that for Achan's trespass, *wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel, and that man perished not alone in his iniquity*^b. The sin of David also, in numbering the people without orders, occasioned the death of seventy thousand of them by a plague^c. Public and national judgements commonly involve the good and bad in one undistinguished ruin. And does not the second

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^a Josh. xxii. 20.

^c 2 Sam. xxiv.

commandment threaten what has been often verified, in the history of mankind, the visiting of the iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children*?

WITH regard to this we only observe, that all the evils and inconveniences which the wicked are able to bring on the righteous, are only of a temporal kind; whereas the benefits accruing to sinners from the righteous, are both temporal and eternal. Then, though innocent persons suffer on account of the wicked, yet it is the wicked alone who are punished, even in these sufferings of the righteous. So the sins of parents are punished in the calamities inflicted on their innocent offspring, and the crimes of a Prince are punished in the diminution of his people. The condemning of innocent persons to suffer in place of the guilty, is a disorder which hath rarely happened, except through error of judgement. It is related indeed of the Emperor Nero, that he raised a cruel persecution against the Christians at Rome, by accusing them of setting fire to that city; a crime of which he was himself most probably the author. But such a violent perversion of justice would hardly, it should seem, have been thought

* *Delicta majorum immeritus lues. Hor.*

thought of, even by that monster of tyranny, if he had not judged it necessary for his own defence. But whatever be the immediate occasion of natural evil, or suffering, it produces the same effect to those who are properly exercised thereby, which is to improve their piety and virtue. And persons may be sometimes restrained from sin for the sake of others, who would not be restrained from it on their own account.—But these are only a few hints suggested by the bye, which do not properly belong to our subject. We proceed to

II. THE *second* and principal thing proposed in this Section, *namely*, to illustrate, from the above considerations, the efficacy of CHRIST's merits and intercession with respect to us.—This matter will now, I trust, be easily understood; and by what has been said of cases more familiar, even plain and illiterate minds, if unprejudiced, may be assisted to form just notions of what they have to hope for from GOD, on account of the righteousness of his dear and only Son. Next to the mercy of GOD, which is never to be forgotten, the benefits of our redemption by CHRIST flow chiefly from the righteousness and holiness of his life; and particularly from the eminent patience, piety, sub-

mission, and benevolence displayed at the close of it, which avail with GOD in favour of sinners, in the same manner as do the piety and virtue of good men in general; only the effects of such singular excellencies are proportionally greater, and more extensive:—not to make GOD merciful (I repeat it) or induce him to exercise mercy in any improper case;—but by his gracious and wise appointment, because his mercy is great unto the heavens, and he delights to exercise that amiable perfection in every case where it can be fitly done, and chooses this way of doing it as most proper to reclaim offenders, and to promote real holiness and righteousness among his rational offspring. And if the virtue and obedience of men, who are compassed with infirmities, and subject to numberless imperfections, hath been in many cases so acceptable to GOD, that for the sake of it, he hath declared himself willing to shew mercy to some who had no title to it; to how many more sinners will he extend mercy, and in a larger degree, on account of the righteousness of one so peculiarly dear to him as the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who hath exhibited a character of unspotted and consummate excellence?—But let us now see what authority of Scripture we have for these sentiments.

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It hath been already shewn, that as every part of our SAVIOUR'S life and work was most acceptable to GOD, so the merit of his character received its highest finishing on the cross, where, *He gave himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God^k*. Therefore GOD hath graciously *made us accepted in the beloved^l*, who of ourselves were unworthy of his acceptance; and hath granted us *redemption^m through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his graceⁿ*. This great benefit we obtain, not on our own account, but by our relation to him who died for us, and in whom GOD is well pleased. Faith, repentance, and obedience to the Gospel, are indeed absolutely necessary on our part, to give us admission into the fellowship of the SON of GODⁿ; and we are sometimes said to be *justified by faith*. But the primary, direct, and efficient causes of our justification, are only to be found in the free grace of GOD, and the abundant favour he has for

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^k Eph. v. 2. ^l Chap. i. 6. ^m Verse 7. ⁿ 1 Cor. i. 9.

* *Ἀπολυτρωσις*, *redemption*, may here, and in many other places of the New Testament, signify the same with *ἱλασμός* *propitiation*, *expiation*, or *atonement*; especially where it is said to be effected by blood, which refers more properly to *expiation* than *redemption*. The same word in the Hebrew, *כִּפָּר*, answers to both. Redemption is the buying again of a slave or captive, by paying a price for him, whereby he obtains his liberty.

his SON, which he is willing should reach in some degree, to all that are connected with one so dear to him: *We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth as a propitiatory or mercy-seat, through faith in his blood, to declare (or demonstrate) his righteousness, by the remission of past sins, committed in, or during the forbearance of God; to declare, adds the Apostle, his righteousness at this time, (which never was done so completely before) that he might be just, (that is, might appear to be righteous, merciful, and true to his promises), and the Justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus*°. If this constitution demonstrates the righteousness of GOD, as it certainly does, it likewise shews the great value he puts on the righteousness of CHRIST, and his obedience unto death, and how desirous he is that sinners may share the benefit thereof in their justification. Hence CHRIST is the *propitiation** (or expiatory victim) *for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world*°, provided they be forsaken. His life, in the manner he gave or spent it, was a ransom of such value in the sight of GOD°, that for it he gave life to a perishing

° Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.

° 1 John ii. 2. Chap. iv. 10.

° Matth. xx. 28.

° 1 Tim. ii. 6.

* *ιλασμος.*

perishing world'. The blood of CHRIST was precious enough to redeem us; because it was *as the blood of a lamb, without blemish, and without spot*'. For, He having *offered himself without spot unto God, bath obtained eternal redemption for us*', or a complete, final, and everlasting atonement; assuring all men, in all ages, who obey the Gospel, of the full remission of sins. And as, *for the disobedience of one, many were,* without any impeachment of divine justice, *made sinners,* or treated as such, by being adjudged to death; so it is still more agreeable, the Apostle argues, to the nature and will of GOD, that *for the obedience of One, many should be made righteous,* by being restored to life". In short, the worthiness of CHRIST was most eminently displayed in his endeavouring to save men at the price of his blood'. This is of great estimation in the sight of GOD, who is pleased, for the sake of it, to shew favour to the unworthy, provided they turn from their evil ways, and join themselves to the Son of his love.

MOREOVER, it is this goodness and piety of the SON of GOD, or his perfect obedience and submission to his Father's will in the

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* John vi. 51.

* 1 Pet. i. 19.

* Heb. ix. 12, — 14.

* Rom. v. 15, — 21.

* Rev. v. 9.

greatest trials, which gives force and efficacy to all his intercessions in behalf of men. GOD *heareth not sinners*^w; but *Him he beareth always*^x. In the days of his flesh, JESUS prayed, and was heard, for the stability of his Apostles: *Holy Father! keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me; keep them from the evil*^y. With the like success, he prayed for the Apostle Peter in particular, that his faith might not utterly fail in the great trial which he saw approaching him^z. He further prayed for all that should become his followers, in all ages, to the end of the world: *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me*^a. He prayed also for his enemies, as we have seen, while they were nailing him to the cross, and pled their ignorance in excuse for their crime; and his prayer had, without doubt, the desired effect with regard to many of them, who afterwards repented. But *he prayed not for the world*^b, the reprobate generation of impenitent sinners; because while they continue such, nothing can be done for them.

AND as JESUS prayed both for his friends and his enemies while he was on earth, so he

^w John ix. 31.^x Chap. xi. 42.^y Chap. xvii. 11.^z Luke xxii. 32.^a John xvii. 21.^b Verse 9.

he is now in Heaven a High Priest, who appears in the presence of GOD for us^c, and maketh intercession for us^d; not merely, we may believe, in the general sense of governing his church, and superintending all the affairs of our salvation, but also by employing his power and favour with the Almighty Parent of the universe, for the acceptance of our imperfect prayers and services, and more particularly for procuring us space for repentance amidst our manifold provocations, and the pardon of our sins, when we truly forsake them. For, as we have no access to the Father but through him^e, so our prayers ascend up before GOD^f, and are acceptable to him only by being joined with the sweet incense of CHRIST's intercession. *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous^g, whose blood speaketh better things than the blood of Abel^h.*

THUS, through Divine mercy, we not only obtain good by the instrumentality of CHRIST, but also for his sake. *Your sins are forgiven you, says the Apostle, for his Name's sakeⁱ. We are justified in, or by the name of the Lord Jesus^k.* Not only hath he, by his
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^c Heb. ix. 24.

^d Chap. vii. 25. Rom. viii. 24.

^e Eph. ii. 18.

^f Rev. viii. 3, 4.

^g 1 John ii. 1.

^h Heb. xii. 24.

ⁱ 1 John ii. 12.

^k 1 Cor. vi. 11.

consummate virtue and obedience, acquired the power of conferring the most important benefits on his sincere followers, (of which we shall speak afterwards), but that same obedience and virtue is exhibited in Scripture as a motive and inducement to GOD ALMIGHTY to grant these benefits; and this for the honour of virtue, the encouragement of its friends, and the conversion of its enemies. For, though he is essentially merciful, and wants nothing to incline him to exercise mercy in every compassionate case, yet he chooses to grant both the means of repentance, and the benefit of pardon, out of regard to the righteousness of CHRIST: thereby to increase the glory and happiness of his Beloved Son; to animate the good in their imitation of him; and to teach sinners, that though these benefits are freely offered to them, they are not to look upon them as their due, or as what belong to them of right.

BUT let it be carefully observed here, as it was also remarked in the former case, that the holiness and righteousness of JESUS CHRIST can procure substantial good to none but such as are disposed to improve the grace conferred on them through him: It can secure the stability of the righteous, only on condition of their continued watchfulness
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and fidelity ; and obtain pardon for sinners, only by bringing them to repentance. Other-ways, none of those who are favoured with the Gospel, can be in the least benefited by him.

THE parable of the barren fig-tree sets this matter in a clear light¹.—The lord of the vineyard seeing it produce no fruit, after a long time of care and cultivation, gave orders that it should be cut down ; for, *why cumbereth it the ground?* An advocate interposes, not against the will of the master, but in a way perfectly agreeable to him, saying, *Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well: if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.* Thus our LORD's intercession may avail to procure a respite for sinners, and further means of repentance, till all proper methods be tried for their conversion ; and such benefits may be granted to them, partly out of respect to the worthiness and excellence of his character, and that heroic virtue displayed by him in his death ; and on the same account, the pardon of their sins upon repentance. But neither his intercession, nor merits, were ever intended to procure pardon to obstinate and final impenitence.

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¹ Luke xiii. 6,—9.

It may not be amiss to add, that what we call merit, in the high sense of the word, seems to take away, or derogate from the grace of GOD; *as if the reward were not reckoned of grace, but of debt^m*, and there were room for boasting before GOD. But, who is able absolutely to make GOD his debtor? *Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him againⁿ?* Certain it is, we are not said any-where in the New Testament, to be saved by the merits of CHRIST, but always by his obedience, righteousness, blood, death, life, &c. that we may never forget the free grace or gratuitous favour of GOD the Father, as the first and main cause of our salvation. Nor are we ever directed in Scripture expressly, to ask any thing of GOD for CHRIST's sake, or for his merits, but always to ask *in his Name*; which, though it signify that we hope to be heard for his sake, and on account of his merits, yet is not to be confined to this alone, but implies much more, *to wit*, that we ask as his disciples, according to his directions, and to the terms of his gospel, and trusting to be aided by his power; in short, that we ask with all the requisite qualifications of acceptable prayer: For, *whatever ye shall ask in my Name, says CHRIST, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the*

^m Rom. iv. 4.ⁿ Chap. xi. 35.

the Son°.—From the whole of what has been said in this Section, we may learn,

1st, To beware of disparaging moral righteousness, and especially to beware of those who make it a point of religion to disparage it. Shall we presume to disparage what God esteems, and what is the fruit of his Holy Spirit? Righteousness, we see, is acceptable and precious in his eyes, and avails with him for the procuring of favours and benefits, always to those who are possessed of it, and sometimes to others beside. Nor is this true only of the perfect and unspotted righteousness of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, but proportionably also of the more defective righteousness which is to be found among ordinary men. In fact, righteousness including every branch of duty, differs in our Blessed LORD, and in ordinary men, only in the degree of it. In him it was complete, and without blemish; in all other men, it has a mixture of imperfection. The righteousness of a Noah, a Daniel, or a Job, of a Moses, and Samuel, and other ancient worthies, was not without its defects; yet God was pleased to accept of it, and to reward it, by bestowing favours not only on these persons themselves, but on others for their sakes: and so it is in all other

° John xiv. 13.

other cases in proportion. To *trust in ourselves that we are righteous, and despise others*^p, is the sure characteristic of bad men. To *go about to establish our own righteousness*^q, in opposition to that which is taught and prescribed by GOD, is error and folly: And to be puffed up with the conceit of our own righteousness, is inconsistent with the real possession of righteousness, humility being essential to every good character. Nor can we without high and criminal presumption, lay claim to eternal life as nothing more than the due reward of our righteousness.—But then, on the other hand, to represent the best things that we can do, as equally odious and contemptible in the sight of GOD, with the worst, is false and unjust in itself, and tends to cut the sinews of virtuous industry, by making men altogether careless about their moral conduct. It borders very nearly upon the practice of those who call evil good, and good evil, and put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter^r. Indeed we find men in Scripture confessing, that *all their righteousnesses are as filthy rags*^s; and a very proper confession it is for the mouth of sinners, of which number all men in one sense are. But from thence it can never be fairly inferred, that the righteousness of all men without exception, is hateful

^p Luke xviii. 9. ^q Rom. x. 3. ^r Isa. v. 20. ^s Chap. lxiv. 6.

ful to God, and despised by him, or that he does not make a great difference between the righteous and the wicked. *That the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee, Lord! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* But,

2d, ALTHOUGH we say, that God, in his supreme wisdom, is graciously pleased to let the virtue of the righteous redound to the benefit of sinners, and to extend favour in a certain degree to the latter, for the sake of the former; this affords no ground for the Popish doctrine of supererogation, as if it were possible for any man to be better than he needs to be, and to acquire a stock of merit for the use of others, beside what he has occasion for himself. No ordinary man's virtue can come up to the purity and rectitude of the Divine Law: the obedience of JESUS CHRIST himself did not exceed it, and how then can ours? *When we have done all those things which are commanded us, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do*. Indeed the lowest degree of virtue may be said to have merit in it, compared with vice, and will no doubt be properly distinguished from it by the righteous Judge of all; since *a cup of cold water given to the meanest of Christ's flock,*

¹ Gen. xviii. 25.

^u Luke xvii. 10.

flock, in the name of a disciple, shall in nowise lose its reward^v. In common language, we ascribe merit or worth to every man in whom goodness prevails; and the more, the greater. And in Scripture we are taught, that there must be worth or merit in all that shall be finally admitted to the happiness of Heaven: whom our LORD describes as *accounted WORTHY to obtain that world, and the resurrection of the dead*^w. And again, *Watch ye therefore, says he, and pray always, that ye may be accounted WORTHY to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man*^x. And concerning glorified saints, *They shall walk with me in white, for they are WORTHY*^y. But this worthiness is no equivalent for the rewards which GOD hath prepared for them that love him^z; and no man can merit rewards for others. Whatever benefit accrues to them for his sake, it is a reward to him, not to them. The merit of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, compared with the best of men, was unspeakably great and transcendent: yet it did not equal, even in his case, the munificence of GOD, in rewarding it. For, St Paul represents his reward, not as a compensation of strict justice, but as a gift of GOD's grace, an effect of his immense

^v Matth. x. 42.^w Luke xx. 35.^x Chap. xxi. 36.^y Rev. iii. 4.^z Rom. viii. 18.

immense bounty and liberality, when he gave* (or granted) him a name above every name^a, &c. In short, if GOD is pleased to reward virtue less or more, by bestowing blessings on the owner, and on others for his sake, it is not because any one of his subjects hath done more than he was obliged to do, but because the Supreme Ruler of the universe loves to honour and encourage every degree of virtue, and to promote, by the fittest means, the true happiness of his reasonable creatures, which is much to the praise of his wisdom and goodness. Further,

3d, WHAT noble ideas does this part of the Gospel Scheme give us, of the greatness and holiness, as well as condescension of GOD? And what a happy influence is it fitted to have on the tempers and lives of men?—GOD does not permit the holiest men to have access to him, but through the intervention of One still holier, and without any taint of sin; One, by his unblemished holiness, peculiarly endeared to him, and selected and separated on that account, to be the Medium of all his intercourse with men. On the other hand, he does not reject the vilest sinners, when, detesting their own vileness, they come to him

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* Philip. ii. 9.

* *Exagisato.*

through the Mediator whom he has appointed, and in his way. The least worthy are invited, provided they repent and believe the Gospel; and the most worthy are reminded of their imperfection. All are instructed in the most affecting manner, what it is that will recommend them to GOD, and what they must aspire after, in order to have communion with him. Thus, *We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord^b.* Again,

4th, No just objection can now lie against the mediation, merits, or intercession of CHRIST, as represented in Scripture; seeing it is so agreeable to the ordinary course of Providence, and so much of a piece with the conduct of GOD in other instances, of which we have daily experience. Nothing can more satisfy the mind of a rational enquirer, or more effectually shut the mouth of a pretended Deist, who rejects the Gospel, than to shew that the facts of revelation correspond with the facts of nature and experience, and bespeak themselves to be from the same Author. This renders us in a manner eye-witnesses of the truth, and leaves us no alternative,

^b 2 Cor. iii. 18.

ternative, but to be either Christians, or Atheists*.

5th, LASTLY, How many motives and incitements have we here, to the practice of righteousness, that is, of all piety and virtue? This we see is necessary to the hearing and acceptance of our prayers, whether for ourselves or others, since GOD heareth not sinners, and the prayers of such as turn away their ears from the hearing of the law, are an abomination to him^c. But he hath put it in our power, by the practice of righteousness, to be happy ourselves, and blessings to others; to be instrumental in promoting the safety and welfare of our country, whatever our station be, and the present and future happiness of many of our fellow creatures; certainly to gain inward peace and comfort in every situation here below, and to

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deliver

^c Prov. xxviii. 9.

* ^c Infidelity (says the Spectator, No. 186.) hath been attacked with so good success of late years, that it is driven out of all its outworks. The Atheist has not found his post tenable, and is therefore retired into deism, and a disbelief of revealed religion only.—We may venture to add, that that is a post which he cannot keep; and he must either leave it, and join the followers of JESUS, or plunge himself again into the darkness and horror of Atheism. Christianity holds too much of GOD, and Reason, and Natural Religion, to be consistently opposed by any of their friends.

deliver our own souls in the day of the LORD. If ever you would have GOD to hear you in the day of your calamity, or to give you that which is good ; if you are touched with a spirit of patriotism and zeal for the public ; if you feel any spark of benevolence towards your brethren, or have any wise and just concern for your own happiness in time and eternity—all these things concur to enforce upon you the study and practice of moral righteousness : Especially considering what has been so often hinted above, that it is in vain for those who have neglected or violated the rules of righteousness in their practice, and have not repented, to hope that they shall be benefited by any righteousness of others, even of CHRIST himself. For, in the final judgement, we may be sure, *The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him*^d : to shew that GOD's ways are equal, and that there is no unrighteousness in him.—‘ Yes, Holy
 ‘ Father! thou wilt ever be justified in thy
 ‘ sayings, and wilt overcome when thou art
 ‘ judged. In this high appointment of a
 ‘ Mediator between thee and men, I see the
 ‘ purity of thy nature, and the wisdom and
 ‘ rectitude of thy government, gloriously
 ‘ displayed,

^d Ezek. xviii. 20.

‘ displayed, at the same time with thy goodness and placability towards sinners; whom
‘ thou doest not permit to come to thee in
‘ their own name, because of their unworthiness and guilt; but neither doest
‘ thou reject them, when, being truly penitent, they come unto thee in the name of
‘ thy dear Son, who knew no sin, and fulfilled all righteousness.—May these views
‘ inspire me at once with humility and confidence. May they teach me to draw nigh
‘ to thee with a true heart, in full assurance
‘ of faith: And while I seek an interest in
‘ thy favour through the merits and intercession of CHRIST, far from encouraging
‘ myself in sloth and security, or in sin of
‘ any kind, may I be fired with the admiration and love of righteousness, and constantly incited to grow in the imitation of
‘ him, through whom I hope for acceptance
‘ in thy sight. Amen.’

SECTION III.

OUR *third* observation, which comes now to be explained, was, That in reward of CHRIST's righteousness and obedience unto death, GOD invested him with the glorious power of calling sinners to repentance, of forgiving their sins when penitent, and of raising them from the dead to eternal life, as well as of punishing the obstinately disobedient.

HITHERTO we have considered the benefits which sinners receive from GOD *for the sake of Christ*. We are now to see the same or greater benefits conferred on them *by Christ himself*, in virtue of the power and authority with which GOD hath invested him as the reward of his consummate obedience. Obedience, or righteousness, it must be confessed, is rewarded in a high degree, when not only the owner, but others also, receive important benefits on account of it. But it is still farther rewarded, if the righteous man enjoys the power of dispensing to others, with his own hands, suitable portions of the same happiness which is imparted to himself. The virtue of a good man may operate indirectly
towards

towards the welfare of others, farther than his immediate power ; but, how glorious is it, when after having given the most substantial proofs of his piety and benevolence, he has on that very account, his power of doing good enlarged, and made equal to his will !—This surely is the highest honour and satisfaction which it is possible for merit to obtain.*

AMONG men, though virtue is often neglected, and left unrewarded, either because it escapes their observation, or because they have not ability to reward it when known; yea though it is not seldom opposed, traduced, and persecuted, through malice and envy, yet all allow it ought to be rewarded; and notwithstanding present disorders, there have been many instances of men, whom real merit hath raised from low stations to very high posts and preferments, that is, it hath given them the power of doing greater good, and of being more extensively useful: agreeably to this equitable rule of the divine administration, *Thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things*^a. We read with pleasure and instruction, the history of a Joseph, who, after a series of great trials and afflictions, which put his virtue to

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the

* Matth. xxv. 23.

the test, was advanced from the condition of a slave and a prisoner, to be prime minister to the king of Egypt; and that of David, whom GOD took from the sheep-folds^b, and made king over his people Israel. But these, and other instances of the like kind, were at best but shadows, faint and imperfect emblems of the honour conferred on our LORD JESUS CHRIST. His righteousness was rewarded beyond our highest conceptions, in a degree to which nothing parallel had ever been heard of among men, and which would never have entered into the heart of man, if it had not been so fully revealed and attested from Heaven: For, *Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the forgiveness of sin^c, and to be the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey them^d.*

BUT, for the better understanding of this matter, it will be proper, *first*, To take a brief survey of the powers with which our exalted SAVIOUR is invested for the good of mankind:—*Secondly*, To shew that these powers were given as a reward of his obedience unto death:—From whence we may be enabled to see, in the *third* place, how his sufferings and death conduce to the saving of men from the guilt and punishment of sin.

I. THE

^b Psal. lxxviii. 70.

^c Acts v. 32.

^d Heb. v. 9.

I. THE ancient prophets often speak of a glorious, universal, and irresistible empire, which was destined for the MESSIAH, and which is to end in nothing less than the entire overthrow and ruin of all his enemies, and the eternal salvation of all his faithful servants. To him GOD said, according to his sovereign and irreversible decree, *Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool*^e:—an oracle which the Apostle asserts to be fulfilled in JESUS the true Messiah, when he says, *This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool*^f. He is represented as sitting, not to signify idleness and inactivity, but the immoveable stability of his power, which no adversary can shake or impair: *For he must reign*^g, adds the Apostle, *till he hath put all his enemies under his feet; and the last enemy that shall be destroyed, is Death*^h.

By the right hand of GOD, and other similar expressions, is denoted a supereminence of dignity and authority above the highest of the Angelic Hostsⁱ, and subject to none but

^e Psalm cx. 1. ^f Heb. x. 12, 13. ^g 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26.

^h See Isa. ix. 6, 7. Luke i. 31,—33. Dan. ii. 44.—vii. 14, 15.

ⁱ 1 Pet. iii. 22.

but him who is the blessed and only Potentate^k. So that those glorious heavenly ministers who spake the word to Moses^l, and by whose disposition the law was given^m, acknowledge CHRIST for their LORD as well as we, and are our fellow-servants in his kingdomⁿ.

OF this high advancement of the SON of Man, the first visible effect, according to what had been often foretold by himself before his death, was the publication of his Gospel in the world, and the free admission of men of all nations into the church of GOD, upon new and equal terms; that is, merely upon their believing in CHRIST, and obeying his precepts, all the peculiarities of the Mosaical Law being abolished and set aside; or what St Luke calls *the preaching of repentance and remission of sins, in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*^o. Therefore JESUS, being entered on his immortal life, says to his Apostles, *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*^p; and subjoins this authoritative command, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: Go, and convert all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and*
of

^k 1 Cor. xv. 27.^l Heb. ii. 2.^m Acts vii. 58.ⁿ Rev. xxii. 9. ^o Luke xxiv. 47. ^p Matth. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world^a. This was the institution of baptism, the initiatory rite of CHRIST's religion; which, among other uses, remains a sure and perpetual monument of this great fact, that he who was crucified, is now actually risen from the dead, and exalted to universal sovereignty, there being *given him, according to the word of prophecy, dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him*^r.

BUT, to preach repentance and remission of sins to the world in the name of a crucified SAVIOUR, was a new and extraordinary doctrine, and required extraordinary attestations to gain credit to it. Nor were these wanting; for our LORD, soon after his ascension into Heaven, fulfilled to his Apostles the promise of the Father, which they had often heard from him, by pouring out upon them the miraculous gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit.

FURNISHED with these endowments, the Apostles, who a little before were ashamed
or

^a Mark xvi. 15. ^r Dan. vii. 14.

or afraid to own any connection with JESUS of NAZARETH, stepped forth in the midst of Jerusalem; and in the temple, on the most public and solemn occasions, to men of all ranks, preached with undaunted resolution.—And what did they preach?—That he whom the Jewish Rulers had so recently condemned and crucified as a malefactor, was now risen from the dead, exalted to celestial dignity and dominion, and constituted the only LORD and SAVIOUR of men. So that it was necessary for all men, and for none more than the Rulers and People of Jerusalem, to repent and submit to his government, and be baptized in his name, if ever they hoped to obtain the remission of their sins, and to escape the wrath to come. These things are related in the 2d, 3d, and 4th chapters of the Acts.

THE truth of his resurrection they confirmed by their own unanimous testimony, supported by the supernatural gifts which they exercised, and the miracles they wrought in his name, which served also as irrefragable proofs of his advancement to power and glory. Nor could they be deterred from this work by any prohibitions or threatnings, or persecutions they met with either from great or small. And having preached a sufficient

ficient length of time to the Jews only, and gained many converts among them, they began, in consequence of a divine vision vouchsafed to the Apostle Peter^s, for that purpose, to offer the Gospel-salvation to pious men of other nations; and then at length proceeded to speak to the idolatrous Gentiles^t, that they might be saved. Which they did with such remarkable success, that in a few years, chiefly by the ministry of the Apostle Paul, numerous churches were planted throughout all the Roman Empire, and were daily increasing.

"THUS our LORD JESUS CHRIST being exalted to the right hand of power, *came* (by his Apostles and Ministers^u) *and preached peace* (as the Prophets had foretold he should do^v) *to them that were afar off, and them that were nigh*; that is, to Jews and Gentiles; shewing, that through him they both have equal access by one Spirit unto the Father; for all of them being sinners, they must be indebted to Divine Grace for their salvation, which was now offered freely, and in the most ample manner, to all that would repent and believe the Gospel. The peace which he preached to them, was peace with one

^s Acts x.

^t Chap. xi. 20.

^u Eph. ii. 17, 18.

^v Isa. lvii. 19. Zech. ix. 10.

one another, by uniting them into one body, or making them one people; peace with God, by the remission of their sins, reconciling them to him; and consequently peace in their own minds, giving them the true enjoyment of themselves. Even in his state of humiliation, *JESUS had power to forgive sins on earth*^w, or to remit the temporal penalties of sin; a power which no Priest or Prophet before him had ever pretended to, and which was competent only to the MESSIAH. —But after his exaltation, he had power to forgive sins in Heaven, by remitting to penitent sinners the punishments due to their sins in another world, or delivering them from the wrath to come^x.

How different was our victorious SAVIOUR from the Conquerors of this world! The first exercise of his power and sovereignty was, not the taking vengeance on his enemies, who had lately brought him to the miserable death of the cross; but offering a free and full pardon to them in common with other sinners, nay before others, upon the most equitable terms. It was the sending out his Apostles, with an authentic commission, and effectual qualifications, to publish the doctrine of salvation in his name to
Jew

^w Mark ii. 20. Matth. ix. 6. Chap. xviii. 18. ^x 1 Theff. i. 10.

Jew and Gentile, and to gather together out of all nations, a new people, who having their past sins forgiven them, might thenceforth serve GOD joyfully, in righteousness and true holiness, all the days of their life in this world, and finally inherit life eternal. And now were fulfilled those ancient oracles, wherein GOD had declared that he would *shake the Heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; yea would shake all nations, and the desire of all nations should come*¹, &c.; that is, He would bring about an astonishing revolution in the world, would change the face of the universe, and introduce a new order of things; and this by means of that illustrious person whom all nations stood so much in need of (though most of them ignorant of their wants, and without any expectation of him), even the Mighty Deliverer, who should enlighten and save them; *in whom it was promised to Abraham, that all the families of the earth should be blessed*²; and of whom Jacob said, *Unto him shall the gathering of the people be*³.

FOR the glorified JESUS straightway appears in the divine character of a Creator, or the Author of a new creation, no less necessary and beneficial than the old; if not
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¹ Hag. ii. 6, 7. Joel iii. 16.

² Gen. xxii. 18.

³ Chap. xlix. 10.

more so, and which extends to all things in heaven and earth. Being begun in himself, *the First-born*^c of it, by his resurrection from the dead^d, it was afterwards all left to be accomplished by his own mediatorial power, the Father having given all things into his hand. In consequence of which, he created them (as the heart of man is said to be created when it is renewed^e, and even the face of the earth at the return of spring^f), by altering their form and arrangement, and putting them under a different rule and constitution from what they were subject to before. He caused light to shine in darkness, brought order out of confusion, and restored harmony and peace where there had been inveterate enmity. He destroyed the Jewish worship and polity, with signal tokens of vengeance towards that whole nation, after they had sufficiently resisted the means of grace, and filled up the measure of their iniquities. He subverted the long established empire of superstition, idolatry, and vice; and planted in its room, the worship of GOD in spirit and truth, and the practice of universal righteousness. *He hath made both one*^{*},
says

^c Rom. viii. 29. ^d Col. i. 15, 18. ^e Psal. li. 10. ^f Psal. civ. 30.

* Some of the texts quoted in this paragraph, are universally allowed to refer to the new creation. It appears to me,

says the Apostle^s, meaning both Jew and Gentile—one new man^h—*CREATED* in righteousness and true holinessⁱ; or as he elsewhere expresses it, *RENEWED* in knowledge, after the image of Him that created him^k; wherein are abolished all the former grounds of distance and variance, and hatred among men. Hence we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works^l. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away; behold all things are become new^m. Nor is this creation confined to men only, but extends much farther: For, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, God hath gathered together in one (or united under one head) all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Himⁿ. He created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ

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Jesus

^s Eph. ii. 14. ^h Verse 15. ⁱ Chap. iv. 24. ^k Col. iii. 10, 11.

^l Eph. ii. 10. ^m 2 Cor. v. 17.

ⁿ Eph. i. 10.

me, that when they are all understood to relate to the same subject, they throw light on one another. But I would not wish these, or any other texts, to be interpreted otherwise than according to the rules of sound criticism. I shall only observe, that it is very likely the creation effected by our LORD JESUS CHRIST, was, like all other things relating to him, the subject of ancient prophecy.

Jesus our Lord^o. By him in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature,—by him were created all things that are in heaven, and that are in earth, (meaning angels and men; for he adds) visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him^p, or for his glory. And he is before all things (to wit, the all things of which the Apostle is speaking, he is before them both in point of time and dignity), and by him all things consist^q, or stand together, as under their common Lord. For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell^r; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven^s. For since he is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, authorities, and powers, are made subject to him^t. And by his exaltation, he is become the Head; not only of the church on earth^u, but of all principality and power^v. The whole Family of God in heaven and earth is put under his government.

THUS

^o Eph. iii. 9, 10, 11.

^r Verse 19.

^u Col. i. 18.

^p Col. i. 14,—16.

^s Verse 20.

^v Chap. ii. 10.

^q Verse 17.

^t 1 Pet. iii. 22.

THUS was the world created a-new, as it had been at first, without any visible force or violence, only by the word of God, accompanied with his divine power; it having been foretold of the Messiah, that he should *send forth judgement unto victory* ^w, or make the truth triumphant upon earth, in a very different way from the warriors of this world. Moreover, the new order of things introduced and established by him, is not to be reversed, (*for we have received a kingdom that cannot be moved* ^x), but to continue, and advance to the end of time, when CHRIST will come again, and be revealed from heaven in all his glory, for the salvation of the righteous, and the destruction of the wicked and impenitent.

WE do not enter into a discussion of the intermediate events and revolutions that have happened, or that shall be brought about by his power in the government of the church; concerning which, especially the last, there have been different opinions among christians, and indeed must be, as the knowledge of them can be derived only from prophecies, which will always be dark before their fulfilment. But we proceed to what is a sure and universally acknowledged object of our

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faith,

^w Isa. xlii. 1,—4. Matth. xii. 17,—21. ^x Heb. xii. 28.

faith, I mean that glorious display of our SAVIOUR's power, which will be exhibited in the raising of the dead, even all that have lived since the beginning of the world : For, *All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*^y. *There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust*^z. The saints who remain alive upon the earth at his coming, shall be changed, without dying ; and all the saints found living, or raised to life, shall be furnished by him with bodies suited to the celestial mansions they are to inhabit, *fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself*^a.

THEN shall all nations be assembled before his august tribunal^b, to receive the eternal retribution of their deeds ; and the righteous being separated from the wicked, shall be completely and publicly justified in the eyes of the whole universe, eternally delivered from death and all the penal consequences of sin, and put in the secure possession of the joys and glories of the kingdom of the SON of GOD. But the impenitently wicked *shall*
be

^y John v. 28, 29. ^z Acts xxiv. 15. ^a Philip. iii. 21.

^b Matth. xxv. 32.

be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from his glorious power^c.—And having thus fulfilled the ends of his mediatorial office, having put down all rule^d, and all authority and power, effectually subdued all his enemies, and destroyed Death the last and most terrible of them, he shall return like a mighty conqueror, and deliver up the kingdom so gained, to GOD, even the Father, who gave him power to subdue it, laying all the trophies of his victories at the foot of his throne, and acknowledging, in the very height of glory, his subjection to him as much as before, that GOD may be all in all. Nor shall his own dignity and happiness be any thing diminished by that surrender, but vastly increased; because, having attained the completion of his desires, he shall then begin to be celebrated, not as the destined or expecting, but the actual Conqueror of all his enemies, and Saviour of his people; and he shall be for ever glorified in his saints, and admired of all them that believe^e.

THUS hath the Father Almighty given to his Son*, not only power to make all things

U 3

new,

^c 2 Thess. i. 9. ^d 1 Cor. xv. 24,—28. ^e 2 Thess. i. 10.

* “I shall consider the doctrine of the text, (Philip. ii. 9, 10, 11.) says Dr Sherlock, in the following method:—

First,

new^f, and to reconcile all things in heaven and earth^g; to restore the fallen race of men; to gather, preserve, and govern his church in this world, till time shall be no more: But what is much greater and more extensive, He hath given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as^h shall enjoy the same; to all the virtuous and holy in every age and nation from the beginning to the end of time. *He hath given him authority to execute judgementⁱ on the whole human race, by acquitting the righteous, and condemning the wicked, finally, and without appeal. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son^k. He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the*

^f Rev. xxi. 5.

^g Col. i. 20.

^h John xvii. 2.

ⁱ Chap. v. 27.

^k Verse 22.

First, That the power and authority exercised by CHRIST JESUS, in and over the Church of GOD, are derived from his exaltation: And consequently, *secondly*, That the honour and worship paid to CHRIST in and by the Church of GOD, are founded in his exaltation.—*Thirdly*, That the power and authority exercised by CHRIST, and the honour and worship paid to CHRIST, are, and ought to be, ultimately referred to the Glory of GOD the Father. These propositions (adds he) are so evidently contained in the words of that text, as to be subject to no doubt in the explication: But it may be of service to show, that the doctrine is agreeable to, and is confirmed by the whole tenor of Scripture." See Sherlock's Discourses, Vol. IV. Disc. 1st, Part 3.

the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead¹.

II. Now, that JESUS attained to all this power and glory, as the reward of his righteousness, and obedience unto death, it will not require many words to prove: *For the Father gave all things into the hand of his Son^m, because he loved him; and he loved him, because the Son did always those things that pleased himⁿ; and particularly, because he declined not to lay down his life^o, out of love to him, and to the children of men. JESUS of Nazareth was a man approved of GOD^p, during the course of his humble ministry here below, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which GOD did by him among the people of Israel; and he more than once received, by a voice from Heaven, the glorious testimony, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased^q.*

BUT his resurrection from the dead, and the pre-eminence or lordship thereby given him over men and angels^r, was the most signal and incontestible proof of the Father's

U 4

love

¹ Acts xvii. 31. ^m John iii. 35. ⁿ Chap. viii. 29. ^o Chap. x. 17.
^p Acts ii. 22. ^q Mat. iii. 37. Chap. xvii. 5. ^r Col. i. 18.

love to him, and of his entire approbation and acceptance of all that he had done and suffered in his service. *God hath raised him up*, says the Apostle, *having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it*^a. It was not possible, that one so innocent and dear to GOD, should be suffered for ever to lie under the unmerited infamy with which he had been loaded by wicked men; or that HE should be detained in the grave, whom GOD had decreed to possess the glory of an everlasting kingdom, and to be made mighty to save. The acquisition of this power, so beneficial to mankind, was the end of all the preceding steps of his humiliation. It was HIS glory^b, into which it behoved him to enter after his sufferings; and a glory most certainly destined for him before the foundation of the world^c. It was the joy set before him^d, for the sake of which, and not by way of punishment, he endured the cross, and despised the shame of it. The LORD JESUS submitted to the humblest offices of charity, and to the infamy of the cross, not unconscious either of his present dignity, or his future greatness; but *knowing that the Father had given* (that is, decreed to give) *all things into his hands, and that he was come from*

^a Acts ii. 24.^b Luke xxiv. 26.^c John xvii. 5.^d Heb. xii. 2.

from God, and went to God^w. To this end, Christ both died, and rose, and revived, (or entered upon a glorious and immortal life) that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living^x; and so have power to bestow the rewards of immortality on all the good and virtuous among them. We see not yet all things put under him, says the Apostle to the Hebrews, but (what is undoubtedly a great step towards it, and a sure pledge of the whole) we see JESUS, who, by the suffering of death, was made for a little time lower than the angels, that, by the grace of God, he might taste death for every man: we see him crowned with glory and honour^y. In short, the SON OF GOD was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows^z, because he loved righteousness, and hated iniquity. And seeing, after many other instances of humility and benevolence, he did, in the exercise of these virtues, become ^a obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross: therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name (of power and majesty) which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; (that is, men and angels, both good and bad) and that

^w John xviii. 3.

^x Rom. xiv. 9.

^y Heb. ii. 9.

^z Chap. i. 9.

^a Philip. ii. 9,—11.

that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

FROM all which it appears, that CHRIST's exaltation was the reward of his obedient sufferings. And here, most of all, we ought joyfully to acknowledge GOD, in the lovely and hope-inspiring character of a *Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*^b. The crowning of the merit of his SON with such peculiar honour and power, was a testimony of his regard for piety and worth, which must for ever excite the admiration and praises of the whole rational creation, and is calculated to fill them with the firmest confidence under his government. Here they are called upon to observe, how GOD delights to honour them who honour him, and are animated in the performance of their duty. Hence they are led to conclude, that certainly virtue is very precious in his eyes; and will not fail, after it is properly tried and ascertained, to receive joy unspeakable and full of glory. Suffer, indeed, the Blessed JESUS did, grievously suffer; but *He was made perfect through sufferings*^c, so that he became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. 'He went up to the throne of God, (as one * expresses it) by the steps of sorrow.' For, as he yielded

^b Heb. xi. 6. ^c Chap. ii. 10.

* OGDEN.

yielded a perfect obedience to GOD, so GOD rewarded him in the highest possible degree. Now, from hence we shall see in some measure the main object of our enquiry, *namely,*

III. How the sufferings and death of CHRIST tend to save men from the guilt of sin.—Their efficacy towards this happy end, flows chiefly from their leading the way to that celestial aggrandisement and power, whereby *He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him*^d. By his willing obedience unto death, JESUS hath attained power to execute and fulfil all the grand promises of the Gospel; and particularly, to take away the guilt of sin, and deliver all sincere penitents from the condemnation due to it. To this power, his death or crucifixion was, by the sovereign appointment of GOD, a necessary step; but without this power following, it would have availed nothing more than the death of any other martyr. If he had not risen and taken possession of immortality himself, he could never have bestowed immortality on others: he could never have been constituted Lord and Judge of all, nor could we have reasonably believed and trusted in him as our Saviour: and for his resurrection, it is certain there could have been no place, if he had

^d Heb. vii. 25.

had not first died. Some may ask, Why might he not have attained his dominion or lordship over all flesh, by being translated to heaven without tasting of death? To which I answer, there is no doubt but GOD ALMIGHTY could have found other methods of saving us, without the bloody passion of his dear and only SON. But this is the method which he has chosen, and in which, therefore, we ought to acquiesce; and he has likewise been pleased to discover to us in his word, many reasons (which I will not now attempt to enumerate) why this method was preferable to any other. Particularly to the present question, it is obvious, that if CHRIST had been translated to glory without dying, we could not have had in him an example and pledge of our resurrection from the dead. The translation of a person without suffering death, may be an evidence of another state and world; but it affords no evidence that the dead shall be raised. In fact, our hope of a deliverance from death, the wages of sin, and the curse of the law, is founded essentially on our SAVIOUR's having conquered it before us. For, as he died for us^e, so for us too, and not merely for himself, he rose again. The noble and happy fruit of his passion, both to himself and us, was its being

^e 2 Cor. v. 15.

ing followed by a resurrection to immortal life, and to the possession of all power in heaven and earth: through which resurrection, *we are begotten again to the hope of life, and of an uncorruptible inheritance reserved for us in heaven*^f. JESUS was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification^g. So that whatever effect his death had with regard to our offences, we could never have obtained the benefit of justification from them, if he had not been raised again. This is elsewhere asserted by the same Apostle, in the most explicit terms: *If Christ be not raised, says he to the Corinthians, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins*^h; and shall no doubt ever remain so for him, since without this, all his promises are fruitless and void. But, in virtue of his victory over death, and exaltation to power, CHRIST can truly say to his Disciples, *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death*ⁱ. And in the sure prospect of it, he could say to them before his death, *Because I live, ye shall live also*^k.

ON this account, we have reason, amidst our present afflictions and mortality, to be
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^f 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

^g Rom. iv. 25.

^h 1 Cor. xv. 17.

ⁱ Rev. i. 18.

^k John xiv. 19.

always rejoicing in hope, and patient in tribulation¹; because CHRIST is risen, as our Prince and Head, to immortal glory, and hath power to confer the same on us; which gives a farther, and a most delightful security to the divine promise. For the members must certainly follow the head in every condition, in honour, as well as in abasement: if the head is already exalted, so shall the members be in due time: And it is not to be imagined that one should have it in his power to bestow a benefit on his dearest friends, and yet should neglect to do it; especially one who hath passed through a course of the bitterest afflictions to attain that power, and who, from the exercise of it, will derive great additional glory to himself; while, without it, the main design of all his labours, and sufferings, and triumphs, would be frustrated.

A sincere christian can, even in the most afflicted condition, say with assurance, *I know that my Redeemer liveth^m*; and that he who was once offered to bear the sins of many, shall, to them that look for him, appear the second time without sin unto salvationⁿ. Yes, *I know whom I have believed, (to wit, one who is faithful to his promises, and thoroughly disposed to fulfil them, whose ability also is not inferior*

¹ Rom. xii. 12.^m Job xix. 25.ⁿ Heb. ix. 28.

ferior to his inclination), and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day°. ‘ My life, which I consecrate to his service, and resign to his disposal, though I should lose it in his cause a little sooner than it would fall by the course of nature, I am confident that he will preserve it safe for a glorious recompense, to the great day of judgement.’—How consoling are these sentiments to the heart of an afflicted, or a dying saint !

INDEED the Apostles every where speak with a triumphant confidence, of the inseparable connection which there is between CHRIST’s resurrection, and that of his faithful disciples. St Paul applies it as a motive of comfort for the loss of our dear departed friends : *For, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him*^p; that is, conduct by CHRIST’s power, into the participation of his glory in heaven. This was the great support of the Apostle’s own heart under afflictions, and what above all things encouraged him to persevere in the very difficult and dangerous duties of his office : *Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus, would raise him up also by Jesus, and present*

° 2 Tim. i. 12.

p 1 Thess. iv. 14.

present him with other believers^a before the divine tribunal, to be approven of his Judge, and crowned with immortality. Nay this connection is in his mind so necessary, that if the dead rise not, he concludes the resurrection of CHRIST, notwithstanding all the evidences with which it is confirmed, to be mere fiction. *If there be no resurrection of the dead, says he, then is not Christ risen*^b; *if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised*^c. It is not in the power of words to convey a stronger idea of the certainty of our resurrection, if we only reflect what assurance the Apostle had of the resurrection of CHRIST.—In another place he argues, that our complete salvation through our SAVIOUR's life and power, is an event much more probable now, than that was once, which we know hath actually taken place, namely our reconciliation to GOD by his death. *For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life*^d. And shall we indeed believe, that GOD hath permitted his dear SON to undergo a painful and ignominious death, in order to conquer the enmity of his rebellious creatures, and reduce them to obedience; and yet, that after they are reconciled, and are become dutiful subjects, at
all

^a 2 Cor. iv. 14. ^b 1 Cor. xv. 13. ^c Verse 16. ^d Rom. v. 10.

all this expence, they will be suffered to perish, notwithstanding their crucified SAVIOUR hath received power to bestow immortality on them? Sure that would be highly inconsistent and absurd. The former was a thing in itself far more unlikely before it happened; but after it hath come to pass, the latter is easy, natural, and infallibly certain. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things*^u? The fulfilment of his most magnificent promises respecting our future salvation, will cost him less than what he hath already done for us in the death of his Son: this first gift is greater than all the rest which are to follow, however great, and affords the utmost assurance that they will come in due place and time. Hence the Apostle, with irresistible force of argument, proceeds to demand, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*^v. If the elect or chosen people of GOD, his faithful servants, who love him, and walk in the way of his commandments, are not condemned either by GOD or CHRIST, what power is

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there

^u Rom. viii. 32.^v Verse 33, 34.

there in the whole universe which they have reason to fear? None certainly; there is no condemnation to them: for, both from GOD and CHRIST, they have already received such testimonies of love, such proofs of a disposition and ability to justify them, and to complete the work of their salvation, as are more than sufficient to free them from all jealousies on that side, and to establish their hearts in perfect confidence and peace.

THE truth is, though we are often said in the New Testament to be now justified, saved, redeemed, delivered, and the like, because we are put in the sure way of obtaining these benefits, and cannot fail of them but by our own fault, yet, strictly speaking, we are at present saved from the guilt of sin, in hope and expectation rather than in actual possession. For, while here below, *we walk by faith, not by sight*^w. *We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it*^x. *The earnest expectation of the creature (even the new creature) waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God*^y.—*We wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*^z. *We wait for the hope of righteousness*

^w 2 Cor. v. 7. ^x Rom. viii. 24, 25. ^y Verse 19. ^z Verse 23.

*ness (or justification) by faith^a. Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ^b. So speak the Apostles. An earnest indeed, or sure pledge of our justification^c, we receive at present in the gift of the Spirit, and in our deliverance from the slavery of vicious passions. But take away the future happiness which we hope for, and all our present glories, as christians, fade and die. They are reduced in point of duration, to a level with the honours of the world; and they often expose us to more contempt and misery from without, than we would suffer by the want of them. But they are truly great and substantial, because what is begun here, is most certainly to be completed in that future and heavenly world, *whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedeck^d.**

UPON the whole, our resurrection from the dead, and salvation from the wrath to come, or, in one word, our final deliverance from the guilt and punishment of sin, is a work to be effected only by the operation of that mighty power which GOD hath given

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to

^a Gal. v. 5. ^b 1 Pet. i. 13. ^c 2 Cor. v. 5. Eph. i. 14.

^d Heb. vi. 20.

to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, *whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself*^e. But, because the attainment of that power was the fruit and reward of his obedience unto death, and was necessarily connected with it, therefore our redemption and salvation are frequently ascribed in Scripture to the more remote cause of them, the death and passion of CHRIST, as well as to their immediate and efficient cause, which is his immortal life and power; nay oftener ascribed to the former, than to the latter; that our hearts might be more deeply penetrated with a sense of the Divine goodness, of which the death of CHRIST was the most illustrious and striking proof, and such as we can never seriously think of, without feeling the mighty obligation thereby laid upon us, to live not unto ourselves, but unto him who hath bought us with his precious blood.

To illustrate the matter by a lower and more familiar example:—If a patriot hero delivers his country from oppression or slavery by gaining a decisive victory over its enemies, but loses his own life in the conflict, as it hath sometimes happened, (the world hath seen several instances of men who devoted their lives to inevitable destruction for the

^e Col. iii. 21.

the good of their country), we say very truly that he saved his country with and at the price of his blood, though the shedding of his blood was not the thing that did directly and immediately procure its safety, but rather the vigour of his arm, his wise and resolute conduct. Or, if a man exposes himself to great hardships and dangers in order to rescue his friends from captivity, and actually receives very grievous and painful wounds while engaged in this generous service, but escapes death, and gains his point, and has the pleasure to see the happy fruit of all his toils and sufferings; we say, in like manner, that he rescued or redeemed his friends by his blood*, which always conveys an idea of

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* Whatever advantage any one procures, either to himself or others, at the hazard of his life, he may be said to buy it with his blood; and this phraseology is not peculiar to Scripture. Marius, in his war against the Cimbri, having encamped at Aix in Provence, in an advantageous ground, which only wanted water, his soldiers complained that he was going to make them die with thirst. 'Yonder is water (said he to them, pointing to a little river not far off, but to which they had no access, without exposing themselves to the attacks of the enemy) but you must purchase at the price of your blood.'—But King David uses still a bolder figure upon the same subject. When his three mighty men, breaking through an host of the Philistines, brought him water out of the well of Bethlehem, which he earnestly longed to drink of, he would not drink it after it was put into his hand, but poured it out unto the LORD; for, said he, *Is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?* 2 Sam. xxiii. 15,—17.

the generosity of his character, together with his success, though it is certain this success was not in the least promoted, but rather hindered, by his loss of blood. The fact is, that he rescued his friends by conquering and destroying their enemies ; which might possibly have happened without any hurt to the conqueror at all, as it seems to have done in the case of Abraham when he delivered Lot'.—By a similar way of speaking, we find every where in the New Testament, effects ascribed to the death or blood of CHRIST, which were by no means owing to it simply and separately considered, but to it as connected with the purity of his life before, and with the glorious power of his resurrection following it, and which without this power following his death, could never have existed. Thus it is written, that *through death Christ destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*^e. It was not through death considered simply in itself, that he accomplished this great work, but through death as the cause and ground of that mighty power whereby he is able to give unto HIS eternal life. In like manner, GOD is said, *by the cross of his Son, to have spoiled principalities and*

^f Gen. xiv.^e Heb. ii. 15.

and powers, and to have made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in itⁿ, or by him. And it was truly glorious to gain such a victory, by what seemed so contrary to it. But CHRIST would not in fact have obtained this triumph, nay the powers of darkness would have triumphed over him, if his ignominious death had not been succeeded by a resurrection, which gave him power to deliver mankind from the prison of the grave*. So it was not properly when he suffered on the cross, but *when he ascended up on high, that he led captivity captive*¹; and it is this that enables the meanest of his followers to exult over the king of terrors, and to say, *O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory*^k? The victory of our LORD was complete, but not an easy and bloodless one: it cost him the destruction of his body, or fleshly part; but while he lost that, he gained power to crush the sovereignty of Satan, and to break his empire in pieces: according to the original promise of redemption made to man at his first apostacy, *The seed of the woman, said GOD to the serpent, shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*^l.

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FROM

^h Col. ii. 15. ⁱ Eph. iv. 8. ^k 1 Cor. xv. 55. ^l Gen. iii. 15.

* Mortem suscipere non recusavit, ut homo illo duce subactam et concatenatam mortem cum suis terroribus triumphârit. Laet. lib. iv.

FROM these things, then, agreeably to divine historical record, and to ancient prophecy, we may without difficulty perceive, how not only the pardon of sin, but all the other blessings of the Gospel, are derived to us, through the death or blood of CHRIST. If the Gospel hath been promulgated to the world, with proper evidences of its truth, and if multitudes of men of all nations have been converted to the faith of it; this, for the reason above explained, is frequently set forth as one of the blessed fruits of his death, though it was principally and more immediately owing to his subsequent resurrection. With reference to which he himself says, *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*^m; intimating, that that event which his friends could at first so ill bear the thoughts of, and by which his enemies hoped to bury his name and doctrine under eternal infamy, would contribute in the end more than all that had previously happened, to its glory and success. For, as he adds a little after, *If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me*ⁿ: I will persuade innumerable multitudes of men, of every rank and condition, to embrace my religion, as well from among the Gentiles, as the Jews. So we know it hath come

^m John xii. 24.ⁿ Verse 32.

come to pass. And how did the crucifixion of CHRIST (for that is what he means by his being lifted up) conduce so much to this great end? It did so not only by attracting the attention of men, by interesting their affections, and engaging them to consider and examine seriously the cause of so extraordinary an event, (which effects were in some measure common to it with the martyrdom of other saints), but what is infinitely greater and more peculiar, by being a step previously necessary to his resurrection and advancement to the right hand of GOD; in consequence of which, he gave his Apostles power, by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, to be credible and convincing witnesses to him, *both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth*°.

THUS our very knowledge of the Gospel, and of all the noble instructions and motives it proposes in order to reform and sanctify us, or in other words, *our redemption from the ignorance and vanity of a heathenish conversation in which our forefathers lived*°, is a benefit for which we are indebted to the blood of CHRIST. By his blood, *we who were some time afar off, are made nigh*°. By it, he hath *redeemed us to God*°, or *purchased us to be*

° Acts i. 8. ° 1 Pet. i. 18. ° Eph. ii. 13. ° Rev. v. 9.

be a Church of God[†], instead of being, as before, by our ignorance and idolatry, a Synagogue of Satan. *He loved the Church*, (while as yet it had no being as a church), *and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish*[‡]. All which was done after his resurrection, by the preaching of the Apostles in his name. *I have espoused you to one husband*, said St Paul to the Church of Corinth, *that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*[§].

WE are *justified by his blood*[¶], therefore, because by the shedding of his blood, he obtained power to justify us.—*He was raised again for our justification*[¶]. But for his rising again, it is evident, there had been no occasion, if the work of our justification could have been completed merely by the effusion of his blood.—In like manner, *we are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son*[¶], and *our peace was made through the blood of his cross*[¶]. But the reconciling of all things unto himself, was a work which the Father did not accomplish by him, till he had raised him

[†] Acts xx. 28. [‡] Eph. v. 27. [§] 2 Cor. xi. 2. [¶] Rom. v. 9.

[¶] Chap. iv. 25. [¶] Chap. v. 10. [¶] Col. i. 20.

him from the dead to immortal life and glory, and made him the Head of the body, the Church². And because in order to redeem us, CHRIST gave himself for us, therefore *his life is our ransom*^a, and *his blood the price of our redemption*^b. But it is certain our redemption was not procured by his death alone; if it had, there would have been no need of his resurrection, as before said; whereas according to the doctrine of the Apostle Paul, above set forth, if CHRIST had not risen, all our hopes of redemption and salvation by him would have been buried in the same tomb with himself.

THIS Section, I fear, hath been prolix, and yet I cannot conclude it without making at least one practical reflection upon the whole, which is this:—When we see such effectual provision made for delivering us for ever from the guilt and condemnation of sin, and that CHRIST who loved us, and gave himself for us, is exalted to eternal power and glory, for the express purpose of fulfilling all his grand promises to us, does not this tend powerfully to engage our compliance with these gracious purposes of Heaven in our favour? Does it not forcibly persuade us to forsake all sin, and to present ourselves as living sacrifices unto GOD? Does it not kindle in us some zeal for the duties of a
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² Col. i. 18,—20. ^a Matth. xx. 28. ^b 1 Cor. vi. 20. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

humble piety and benevolence, and all good works, to see a stedfast perseverance in them, under extreme sufferings, crowned with such glory and honour, in the person of our Divine Saviour? Does it not animate our hope of immortal glory, to behold the SON of GOD entered into heaven as our forerunner, with a view to secure our entrance in thither after him? And what sincere believer can refuse to follow and imitate, even to death, a Saviour who hath thus gone before us in the sure road to eternal life? Shall not the blood of CHRIST, shed for the remission of sin, prevail on us to forsake our sins, and turn from dead works, to serve the living GOD?—Or, Shall I rather resolve to frustrate all the designs of Divine mercy in my behalf; and, after every thing is prepared on the part of Heaven, with such cost and labour, to put me in possession of immortal bliss, shall I wilfully draw back, and plunge myself into everlasting perdition? ‘Forbid it, gracious
‘GOD! Let me not be so foolishly, so un-
‘gratefully, so desperately wicked! Rather
‘let thy abundant goodness, O GOD! re-
‘claim and sanctify my life, while it admi-
‘nistereth such strong consolation to my
‘heart; and make me a partaker of thy ho-
‘liness, that I may share in those pleasures
‘which are at thy right hand, for evermore,
‘through JESUS CHRIST. Amen.’

SECT. IV.

SECTION IV.

OUR *fourth* and *last* observation relating to the point before us, was, That in the death of CHRIST we have the strongest security given us, for the vouchsafement of pardon to penitent sinners, and in general for the full accomplishment of all Gospel promises and threatenings, even of the whole covenant on God's part, thus sealed with the blood of his only SON.

ALL the literal views which the Scripture gives us, of the connection between the blood of CHRIST and the pardon of sin, have been in some measure explained, as I humbly conceive, in the preceding observations.—For we have seen, that what CHRIST suffered for us, was according to GOD's will, and subservient to his designs of love towards us: that out of regard to such unparalleled goodness and worth as CHRIST displayed in his death, GOD is pleased to shew favour to sinners otherways unworthy of it; and that he hath further rewarded CHRIST's righteousness with power to grant repentance and remission of sins, and eternal salvation to all them that obey him. These
are

are facts drawn mostly from the evangelical history. We now come to a figurative and metaphorical description of the efficacy of CHRIST's blood in taking away the guilt of sin, which does not at bottom mean any thing very different from what has been already said, but yet merits consideration by itself, because it often occurs in the apostolic writings, and will lead us somewhat farther into the nature of CHRIST's religion. It is that by which the death or blood of CHRIST is represented as a sacrifice, solemnly ratifying the doctrine he taught, and assuring the benefit of pardon in its utmost extent, to all them that repent according to his prescriptions. Every article of the doctrine, or covenant, is ratified by the same authentic seal; but the remission of sins to true penitents, is that part of it which falls more immediately under our consideration at present. Hence CHRIST's blood is called the *blood of the covenant*^a, even that *new and everlasting covenant*^b, wherein GOD hath promised for one great article of it, that *our sins and iniquities he will remember no more*^c. According to this covenant, all sins, how numerous and great soever, provided they do not exclude that repentance which the Gospel requires, but are followed by it, shall be forgiven

^a Heb. x. 29.^b Chap. xiii. 20.^c Chap. x. 17.

given unto men, and shall be no obstacle to their enjoying eternal life in heaven. This is the covenant which God hath been pleased to make with us; and this gracious covenant he hath ratified and established in the blood of his dear Son, to give us the greater assurance of its unalterable truth and validity. Moreover, this view of the Gospel, as a covenant or paction between different parties, with a divine seal appended to it, seems to be given chiefly in allusion to the old covenant which God established with the people of Israel by the hand of Moses. It was of another nature, and had another kind of seal: yet there was such a resemblance between them, as, to those especially who had lived under the old covenant, made it very proper to speak of Gospel benefits in figures and allusions borrowed from the former dispensation: which is done occasionally in other parts of the New Testament, but constantly throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews. Here, therefore, it may be proper, before we speak directly to the point proposed, to consider briefly the nature of the old covenant, and what provision it made for the pardon of sin; and to compare it in this respect with the new covenant, or the Gospel of CHRIST.

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1st, THE law of Moses was a temporal constitution, adapted to the use of a single nation, of which GOD himself condescended to be King; and in that capacity, prescribed rules for the method and order of their civil government, as well as for forming their morals, and directing them in the offices of religion. But, omitting the civil and moral part of the law, our subject confines us more especially to its ceremonial institutions. These were very numerous and splendid, and were celebrated in a magnificent tabernacle or temple, constructed in every part according to the Divine direction; where the LORD of Heaven and Earth was pleased, after a more peculiar manner, to manifest his presence, or to dwell and reign in the midst of his people. He was the sole object of all their religious worship: and among other rites and ceremonies to be performed in obedience to him, there were sacrifices and oblations of various kinds; some, as an acknowledgement of mercies received from GOD^d; others, in order to obtain blessings from him^e; and others, to make atonement for their sins. It is these last that we have chiefly to do with at present.

Now, we find atonements were made for places and things *, as well as persons; either

^d Lev. vii. 12.

^e Verse 16.

* See an Essay on this subject in the Theological Repository, Vol. III. p. 385.

either to separate them from a common, to a religious use and service, or to restore them to it, after they had been profaned. Thus, the altar, the high priest and his sons^f, the Levites^g, and the whole people of Israel^h, had each their several atonements of consecration made for them, whereby they were solemnly purified, and set apart for the service of GOD: not that these atonements had any efficacy in themselves to procure the honours and benefits ascribed to them; but that, upon performing the sacrifices required, the persons and things atoned for, were, by the sovereign appointment of GOD, declared to be duly purged and expiated, and fit for his service. Or, if persons, and holy things, by any circumstance became unfit for the public service of GOD, as then regulated, and were excluded or set aside from the same, it was provided, that, by certain sacrifices of atonement, they might be restored to the privileges and uses they had lost. Exclusion from the public worship of God, for which atonements were provided, persons might incur by bodily diseasesⁱ, by natural uncleannesses^k, and accidental events^l, by sins of ignorance^m, and, lastly, by certain moral offences particularly specified, for which a-

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tonements

^f Exod. xxix. ^g Numb. viii. ^h Lev. ix. ⁱ Chap. xiv. xv.^k Lev. xii. ^l Numb. vi. ^m Chap. xv.

tonements seem to have been allowed, lest the number of the excommunicated should become too great. These were instances of fraud and injustice^a, where the damage or loss could be repaired to the injured party^b, and which the offender was obliged to repair before any atonement could be admitted for him. For all these, atonements were to be made by prescribed sacrifices; and when made, the legal incapacity which had been contracted for the worship of the God of Israel, was taken off, and removed.

AFTER all the precautions, however, that particular persons could use, either to avoid, or to wipe away, by proper atonements, all manner of sin and uncleanness, admitting thereof as soon as it came to be known, there might still happen many things unsuitable to the majesty and holiness of God; and many offences committed by his people, might remain unexpiated, because they were not known or discovered. Therefore a day of general and solemn atonement^c was appointed to be observed every year^d, to remove all defects and unfitnesses for the presence and service of God, whether respecting the holy place, the tabernacle, the altar, the vessels of the sanctuary, the ministers of religion, or the whole people of Israel.

BUT

^a Lev. v. 1, &c. Chap. vi. 1, &c. ^b Chap. xix. 21, 22.

^c Chap. xvi. 6,—19. Chap. xxiii. 27, 28. ^d Exod. xxx. 10.

BUT these general atonements were not meant to excuse the omission or neglect of the atonements prescribed for particular sins and uncleannesses which were known; and for sins committed wilfully and presumptuously, whether against the ritual or the moral precepts of the Law, (unless in the few instances formerly specified), no atonements were appointed at all. Wherever life was forfeited, no atonement* could be re-

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* That the custom of sacrificing men and other animals, by way of compensation for the forfeited life of the offerer, or of others, obtained among the Heathen Nations, seems to be an unquestionable fact. See *Cæs. Com. lib. vi. cap. 15*; and *Virgil, Æneid. v. 483.* not to mention other authorities.—But some learned men have doubted whether the atonements prescribed by the Mosaical Law were precisely of the same kind; because no atonement could be admitted where life was forfeited; because atonement was not made in any case merely by the killing of the victim; and because it was made in divers cases where there was no moral guilt, and sometimes without the death of any animal, or any shedding of blood. I do not enter into controversy, but shall beg leave to mention here a curious passage from an Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia, printed in 1779. The Author relates, that at a conference held between Governor Glen and the Creek Indians in 1752, Malatchee, the Head of the Indian party, among other apologies for the outrages lately committed by his countrymen, said, ‘ A Chickfaw, who lived in our nation, in a drunken fit, shot a white man. I knew you would demand satisfaction. I thought it best to give it before it was asked. The murder was committed at a great distance

ceived instead of it'. In this sense, *he that sinned against Moses's law, died without mercy*'. And David was perfectly sensible that none of the legal sacrifices could atone for his guilt, in seducing the wife, and procuring the death of Uriah the Hittite; *for thou desirest not sacrifice, says he, else I would give it thee*'.

ALL

* Numb. xv. 30, 31. * Heb. x. 28. * Psal. li. 16.

' stance from me. I mounted my horse, and rode through
' the towns with your agent. I took the Head of every
' town along with me. We went to the place, and de-
' manded satisfaction. It was given. The blood of an
' Indian was spilt for the blood of a white man. The uncle
' of the murderer purchased his life, and voluntarily killed
' himself in his stead.'—' Here (remarks the historian) is
' an instance of an atonement made, and justice satisfied,
' by the substitution of an innocent man in place of the
' guilty. An uncle voluntarily and generously offers to
' die in place of the nephew: the savages accept of the
' offer; and in consequence of his death, declare that satis-
' faction is made.'—But Governor Glen, it seems, was by
no means satisfied with this substitution. Addressing him-
self to the Indians, he said, ' For these outrages I have
' sent for you to demand satisfaction; and also for the mur-
' der committed in one of your towns, for which satisfac-
' tion was made by the death of another person, and not
' of the murderer. For the future, I acquaint you, that
' nothing will be deemed as satisfaction for the lives of
' our people, but the lives of those persons themselves who
' shall be guilty of the murder.'—Now, whether the British
Governor, or the Indian Chief, was in the right, the reader
will judge. Men will have different notions of these mat-
ters, according to their education, temper, habits of think-
ing, and means of instruction; and are they entitled to
persecute, or even to renounce communion with one ano-
ther, on that account?

ALL the above ceremonies, suited as they were to a ruder age, and a more imperfect dispensation of religion, served to establish and preserve a fœderal union between God and the children of Israel, and to regulate their intercourse with him as their King. The appointed ceremonies of atonement, when duly performed, had, by the will of God, the effect intended by them, to procure forgiveness of the sins for which they were offered, and to remove all hindrances on that score to the free and full enjoyment of the privileges of God's people: But, then, the sins they were offered for, were comparatively small and inconsiderable, generally flowing from ignorance and inadvertency, or from natural and unavoidable infirmities, without any moral guilt at all; and in these they could avail only to the forgiveness of what was past, there being no provision made for the forgiveness of the like sins committed afterwards, except by a repetition of the like sacrificial atonements; nor had they any effect to abolish the reigning power of sin, or to make men cease from sinning for the time to come. Finally, they could at best *sanctify only to the purifying of the flesh**, that is, remove legal incapacities, fit men for the presence and worship of the God of Israel, and

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entitle

* Heb. ix. 13.

entitle them to the quiet enjoyment of Jewish privileges in the land of Canaan:—of the final remission of sin, by a deliverance from death the wages of it, and the attainment of immortal life, they yielded not the least hope or prospect.

WHEN these carnal ordinances, therefore, were set aside by the Gospel, and a more perfect and spiritual worship substituted in their place, it was proper to let the Jewish converts see, that by embracing this heavenly doctrine, they did not forfeit any valuable privilege or advantage allotted by the law to its votaries; but, on the contrary, became entitled to much greater and more substantial privileges. This necessarily introduced a comparison between the legal atonements, and that which we obtain through the mediation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, where the same phrases are used concerning the latter which did properly belong to the former, and the benefit of it is shewn to be far nobler and more important; so that if the legal expiations were types and prefigurations of good things to come, they were, in point of real value, no better than shadows, or faint delineations of them.

THUS

THUS we find our SAVIOUR, in his death, compared to the *Serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness*^x, to the *Paschal Lamb*^y, and to the *Mercy-Seat*^z; and being often called a Sacrifice, which is a general word comprehending different kinds, he is represented more particularly as a sacrifice for sin, or a sin-offering^{z*}, a burnt offering^{b†}, a peace-offering[‡], a meat offering^{c§}, a propitiation^{d||}, or the victim by which it is effected, and a curse^{e¶}. More than one of these, or rather none of them, he could be in a literal sense; but something there was in his history and character which made him resemble them all, though in truth of a very different kind, and vastly superior to whatever was meant, even by the noblest of them. In like manner, he is compared to the Jewish High Priest, though of a different and higher order, and though he excelled him infinitely in the dignity, the duration, the extent, the power, and beneficial effects of his Priesthood. The temple where

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^x John iii. 14, 15.^y 1 Cor. v. 7.^z Rom. iii. 25.^a Heb. xiii. 11, 12.

Rom. viii. 3.

^b Heb. x. 5, 6, 8.^c Eph. v. 2.^d 1 John ii. 2. Chap. iv. 10.^e Gal. iii. 13.^{*} *περι αμαρτίας.*

† *ὁλοκαυτωμα*, or *ὁλοκαρπιαμα*, or *ὁλοκαρπιας*. This is said only as he was prefigured by the sacrifice of Isaac. Gen. xxii. 2, 13.

‡ *θυρια.*§ *προσφορα.*|| *ιλασμος.*¶ *καταρα.*

he officiates, is Heaven; and his flesh is the vail, which being taken away, a free entrance was opened, by a new and living way, into the true Holy of Holies. The sprinkling of the blood of the victim, in order to finish the atonement, answers to the sprinkling of our hearts from an evil conscience; the blood sprinkled is his own blood, and he is at the same time the Priest who sprinkles it. It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand these things otherwise than as figurative allusions; and they are certainly to be interpreted agreeably to the facts and circumstances of the Gospel history, without which we shall be in danger of founding doctrines on them, which they were never intended to convey.

THE Mosaical High Priest entered once a year into the Holy of Holies: JESUS entered into Heaven once for all;—the former with the blood of slain beasts; the latter, with his own blood. In the legal sacrifices, atonement was sometimes made without killing any victim at all^s: when the death of an animal intervened, the atonement was not accomplished merely by its death, but by the sprinkling of its blood afterwards, which was the peculiar office of the High Priest.

MORE—

^s Lev. v. 11,—13.

MOREOVER, what JESUS does for us as a Priest, was not completed by his sufferings on the cross, when he was not yet properly consecrated to his priestly office¹; but having become obedient unto death, and being afterwards raised from the dead, and invested with all power in heaven and earth, he officiates as a High Priest over the House of GOD, and expiates perfectly all sins whatever, past, present, and to come, provided they be truly repented of. He not only grants penitent sinners the remission of their sins in this world, as the law of Moses did, and the free enjoyment of the privileges of GOD's Church; but will finally deliver them from death, and crown them with immortality. And as his sufferings were the necessary means of preparing him for the great office of expiating or making atonement for the sins of men¹, it is evident he could not effectually and completely execute that office, until he ascended into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of GOD.

II. HAVING given this brief account of the legal atonements, compared with that of CHRIST, we now proceed to consider his blood or death as a solemn confirmation of the covenant of our pardon and peace through him,

¹ Heb. v. 9, 10. Chap. viii. 4.

¹ Chap. ii. 17.

him, or as the blood of a victim shed to give force and validity to it.

IN granting pardon to penitent sinners*, God had always from the beginning of the world, exercised his essential mercy and compassion. For the name by which he chose to be known of old, was, *The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin*^k. There was nothing but sin unrepented of, that stood between men and the richest tokens of his favour. Even in
their

^k Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

* ‘ The various methods of propitiation and atonement, (says Dr Johnson) ‘ which fear and folly have dictated, ‘ or artifice and interest tolerated in the different parts of ‘ the world, however they may sometimes reproach or ‘ degrade humanity, at least shew the consent of all ages ‘ and nations in their opinion of the placability of the ‘ Divine Nature. That God will forgive, may indeed ‘ be established as the first and fundamental truth of religion; for, though the knowledge of his existence is ‘ the origin of philosophy, yet without the belief of his ‘ mercy, it would have little influence on our conduct. ‘ There could be no prospect of enjoying the protection ‘ or regard of Him, whom the least deviation made inexorable for ever; and every man would naturally withdraw ‘ his thoughts from the contemplation of a Creator, whom ‘ he must consider as a Governour too pure to be pleased, ‘ and too severe to be pacified; as an enemy infinitely wise, ‘ and infinitely powerful, whom he could neither deceive, ‘ escape, nor resist.’ *Rambler*, No. 110.

their impenitent state, he pitied and sought them; and he waited only for their amendment*, to receive them into the bosom of his love. This was the effect of mere goodness, and often of uncovenanted mercy, of which there are many examples in the Old Testament. See, among others, the following passages: Gen. iv. 7. Chap. xviii. 23. Chap. xx. 17. Neh. ix. Ezek. xviii, xxxiii. Jer. iii. 12,—15. Chap. iv. 1. Jonah iii. 10. Psal. xxxii. 5. Psal. ciii. 3,—19. But under the Gospel dispensation, God, for our comfort, hath graciously obliged himself to extend mercy to the penitent, by an express and perpetual covenant, confirmed in such a manner as to prevent all reasonable doubt of its being fulfilled on his part, in its utmost extent. By virtue of this covenant, we are not left to collect our hope of pardon merely from general reasonings concerning the goodness and placability of God. Beside these, our trust is built on his veracity, his faith-

* ‘ The reason why penitence, or a broken and contrite heart, is so acceptable to God, Ps. li. 17. is because it is adapted to the nature and constitution which God has given us, is the proper and powerful corrective of those vices which occasioned it, prepares the heart for the reception and culture of virtue in general, and has an immediate influence in exciting and increasing our piety, humanity, meekness, moderation, and charity.’ *Farquhar’s Sermons.*

faithfulness, his wisdom, his holiness, and even his justice¹. All his perfections are interested in shewing mercy to sinners who repent. And the blood of CHRIST shed to ratify this covenant, demonstrates, beyond all arguments, the strong and fixed purpose of ALMIGHTY GOD, to make good every tittle of it, as far as the nature and order of his government permits it to depend on him. Guilt is naturally attended with jealousies and fears, which even the deepest repentance is oftentimes not able to appease, especially amidst affliction, and in any awful and alarming scenes of Providence. But GOD, in his goodness, hath used every precaution to invite and encourage the repentance of sinners, and to make them fly to it, as their haven of rest. He hath omitted nothing which is proper to quiet the fears of true penitents, and to assure them of his forgiveness and favour. What better security could he give us of this, than by making the blood of his only Son, the blood of the covenant? And how can we doubt of it, after such a pledge of his love accompanying the promise and oath of his mouth? Any other method of confirming the covenant, if appointed by GOD, might have been sufficient; but there was no other so well fitted

¹ 1 John i. 9.

fitted to establish our faith and hope, and to inspire us with strong consolation.

THAT the blood of CHRIST was shed to confirm the doctrine published by him, and to satisfy our minds of its truth, appears from many passages of Scripture. It is implied in that noble confession which he made before Pontius Pilate, *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth^m*. He had previously confirmed it by many other proofs; but now, he intimates that he was to bear witness to it with his blood. Accordingly his blood is one of the three witnesses to which St John appeals in confirmation of *JESUS being the SON of GODⁿ*; and likewise of the record or testimony, *that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is his Son^o*. *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood: and it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth^p*. In common cases, two witnesses are sufficient to establish any matter of fact; but here are three witnesses; first, *Water*, denoting the innocence of our SAVIOUR's life, and the purity of his doctrine, both of them worthy of GOD and his SON, and perfectly suitable,

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^m John xviii. 37. ⁿ 1 John v. 5. ^o Verse 11. ^p Verse 6.

nay fundamental to a Divine institution :
2dly, The Spirit, which means the Divine testimonies that were given to CHRIST from his baptism to his death, and the miracles which were wrought by him, and his apostles and ministers after him ; all proceeding from the Spirit or Power of GOD, and exhibiting irrefragable proofs of the Divine origin of CHRIST's religion. To these two witnesses, the Apostle adds a *third*, to wit, *Blood*, because CHRIST sealed the truth which he taught, with his blood, and thereby gave the highest assurance which could be given, of his own veracity and integrity in declaring it. All these three witnesses, the Apostle observes, *agree in one*^a, or join in confirming the same truth.

SINCE JESUS CHRIST, therefore, became a willing sacrifice for the truth, and laid down his life in confirmation of his doctrine, which is the new covenant, promising the remission of sins, and eternal life to all sinners who repent and live virtuously ; it was very natural, especially when speaking to persons educated in the Jewish religion, to represent the blood of CHRIST as the blood of a covenant-victim, and to ascribe all the blessings of the covenant to that blood by which

^a 1 John v. 8.

which it was ratified and sealed. This is done by the Apostle to the Hebrews^r, in a passage of which the sense does not clearly appear in our translation; but which may, I conceive, be truly expressed as follows: *And for this reason he is the Mediator (or Surety) of the new covenant, that by means of death (or death intervening) for the expiation of the transgressions (which remained unexpiated) under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of the (victim) appointed (to confirm it)*. For a covenant is valid upon things being dead, (that is, after the sacrifices ratifying it are duly slain and offered); otherwise it is of no strength at all while the appointed (victim of* rati-

^r Heb. ix. 15, 20.

* For clearing up the sense of this passage, I am much indebted to my worthy friend Dr Macknight, who, among many other excellent criticisms on it, with which he favoured me, in a letter dated Edinburgh 31st May 1778, observes, that our Translators ought not to have departed from the usual meaning of the word διαθήκη covenant, to make it signify a *testament* in this place, and that a testament does not need the death of a mediator to render it valid. But the idea of JESUS, the Mediator of the new covenant, dying as a sacrifice to ratify it, gives a clear and consistent sense to the whole. The same interpretation is given in Richie's Book on Atonement. See also Wynne's Translation, and Worfeley's.

ratification) *liveth*. In most, or all ancient covenants between GOD and Man, the death of some victim intervened for the constitution or ratification of the covenant*. This custom prevailed even among the Heathen*, in their public and solemn pactions with one another. *Whereupon* (adds the Apostle) *neither was the former covenant initiated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, (the former in token of GOD's engagement to the terms of the covenant, the latter in token of THEIRS), saying, This is the blood of the covenant which GOD hath enjoined unto you*. To which transaction our Blessed LORD seems plainly to allude in the institution of the Supper, when he says, *This is my blood of the new covenant**, or, *This cup is the new covenant in my blood**. The meaning of both expressions is the same, namely, 'The wine in this cup represents my blood, soon to be shed on the cross, which will

* Gen. viii. 20,—22. Chap. xv. 8,—11. Psal. li. 5.

† Heb. ix. 8,—20. † Exod. xxiv. 3,—8. † Matth. xxvi. 28.

‡ Mark xiv. 24. Luke xxii. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 25.

* Stabant, et cæsa jungebant fœdera porca. *Æneid. viii.*
641. *Liv. lib. I. 24.*

‘ will seal, ratify, and confirm the new covenant, as the old one was confirmed by the blood of the victims slain on that occasion; and by virtue of this new covenant, sinners may, upon repentance and conversion, assure themselves of pardon.’ In reference to this also, when mention is made of our being come, or joined to JESUS the Mediator of the new covenant, it is added, *And to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel*¹; that is, the blood of JESUS, shed to ratify the new covenant; and which being sprinkled on the consciences of sincere penitent believers, makes them know assuredly that their sins are forgiven them. And thus doubtless the Apostle Peter understood it likewise, when, addressing himself to all the believers of the Gospel, he calls them *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*² *. Whence we learn, that Christians are sanctified by the Spirit, and made the Elect of GOD, that they may be obedient to

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¹ Heb. xii. 24.² 1 Pet. i. 2.

* The blood of CHRIST is represented in the New Testament in two different states, as *shed*, and as *sprinkled*. Considered simply as *shed*, it has respect to the whole world, and gives assurance to all men, of GOD’s placability, or his willingness to pardon sinners who repent and believe
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his commands, and so have their guilt washed away, according to the terms of that new and gracious covenant which is established in the blood of CHRIST.

AND this presents us with another view of our subject, according to which we may easily understand how all those great effects come to be ascribed to the blood of CHRIST, respecting the remission of sins, or the removal of guilt, which we find in fact ascribed to it in the New Testament. For if these effects belong to the covenant itself, they may with great truth and propriety be ascribed to that by which the covenant was rendered valid. For example, the abolition of the Mosaical ceremonies is often spoken of as an effect of CHRIST's death: and certainly, if a new covenant, which does not require these ceremonies, was sealed and ratified with his blood, this would of course carry in it the abrogation of the old one; the establishing of the second, implied the taking away

the Gospel. 1 Tim. ii. 6. 1 John ii. 2.—But the *sprinkling* of the blood of JESUS refers only to sincere believers, who fulfil the terms of the Gospel, and whom GOD actually pardons and saves. The blood of CHRIST, therefore, though shed for us all, cannot benefit any but those who are sprinkled with it, which is only the fruit of Faith and Gospel-obedience. Heb. xii. 24. x. 19. Rev. vii. 14.

away of the first^a. Thus we read^b, that JESUS CHRIST *hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us*, (that is, the covenant of peculiarity which before kept Jews and Gentiles so entirely separate); *having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, to make in himself, of twain, one new man, so making peace, and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.*—So likewise^c, ‘the handwriting of ordinances, which stood in force against us, and was so contrary to our common salvation, is declared to be blotted out, and taken out of the way, being nailed to our SAVIOUR’S cross.’ To understand which, we must observe, that the Jews were as much bound and engaged to keep the law of Moses, with all its numerous rites and peculiarities, as men commonly are to the performance of any thing which they have promised by a writing under their hand. And it behoved the Gentiles too, before the manifestation of CHRIST, and while the law of Moses was yet in force, to come under the same engagements, if they would have access to GOD as his people, or obtain a share in the privileges of his Church. But GOD, by the effusion of the blood of his Son on the cross,

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ratifying

^a Heb. x. 9.^b Eph. ii. 14,—16.^c Col. ii. 14.

ratifying the new covenant, did consequently blot out that handwriting, or cancel the obligation of the former covenant, which he had made with one people; and he did it with the same marks of ignominy and contempt which his dear Son had received from that ungrateful and degenerate race. For, as they nailed CHRIST's body to the cross, so, along with it, GOD saw fit to nail their law, and all the peculiar privileges they gloried in above the rest of mankind. Nor was this against their interest rightly understood, but highly favourable to it: for, thus he broke down the middle wall of partition between that people and others; that all believers in CHRIST, of whatever nation or religion, might come together as a new people, and be formed into one great and holy society, upon new terms.

THE same thing is taught by the great Apostle, in divers places of his Epistle to the Galatians, particularly where he says^d, that *when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons.* GOD sent his SON for the redemption of all men, Gentiles as well as Jews, who

^d Gal. iv. 5, 6.

were all* in a sense under the law before the coming of CHRIST; there being then no other way of admission to the benefits of GOD's Church, but that of circumcision, and an absolute subjection to the other ordinances of the law. But CHRIST was sent to set men free from that obligation, and to shew them another way of obtaining the noblest privileges of the children of GOD, that we (believers of every nation) might receive the adoption of Sons. Hence also the same Apostle testifies^e, that CHRIST *hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*; that is, having suffered death on the cross, which he calls being made a curse, because the law says, *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree^f*. And truly in his cruel death on the cross, JESUS appeared to the Jews an object of horror and execration: But he thereby ratified the new covenant, annulled the obligation of the law as a peculiar, national constitution, and freed his followers not only from the original curse entailed on Adam's posterity for the first transgression, but from all the penalties denounced against those who neglect to observe the rites and ordinances of the Mosaic institution. If the Gentiles had not

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been

^e Gal. iii. 13.^f Deut. xxi. 22.

* See Lardner's remarks on Dr Ward.

been liable to the curse of the law, as well as the Jews, they would not have needed to be redeemed from it. But the redemption that is in CHRIST being needed by all, extends equally to believers of every nation; and in consequence of it, we are assured of the Divine favour and acceptance, solely upon the ground of faith in CHRIST, and the suitable fruits thereof, without making ourselves debtors to the law of Moses, or coming under any obligation to observe its appointments. And this being so plainly the design and effect of CHRIST's death, in which the Christians of Galatia had been fully instructed, they were much to blame for departing from the pure and simple truth of the Gospel, to take upon them the yoke of Jewish ceremonies. Wherefore the Apostle reproves them sharply, and expostulates with them in these terms: *O foolish Galatians! who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes JESUS CHRIST hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?* The instruction they had received concerning CHRIST's death, and the ends it was intended to serve, particularly in ratifying a new covenant, and abolishing the obligation of the Mosaical peculiarities, ought to have secured them against so gross

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^s Gal. iii. 1.

an error. He farther tells them^b, (without doubt addressing his discourse to the Gentile converts, of which kind most of them were), *Howbeit, then, when ye knew not God, ye did service to them which by nature are no gods. But, now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye AGAIN* to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire AGAIN to be in bondage?* Which seems to imply, that he understood them, though Gentiles, to have been in bondage to these elements before their conversion, while there was no other way opened to the Kingdom of God. For, though the Mosaical rites were not explicitly enjoined to them, nor were observed by them, yet it is certain they were so far in bondage to these rites before the Gospel, that they could have no access to the Church of God without submitting to them, which he intimates was happily not the case now. Finally, our Apostle thus exhorts that people, *Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled AGAIN with the yoke of bondage*ⁱ.

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FURTHER,

^b Gal. iv. 8, 9.ⁱ Chap. v. 1.

* The interpretation of these texts here given, seems much more natural than that of those who make the word AGAIN to express a bondage in some measure of the same kind with that which the Heathens were formerly subject to. See *Doddridge* on the place.

FURTHER, As the abrogation of the old covenant is an effect justly ascribed to the death of CHRIST, because his blood shed was the solemn ratification of the new; so all the blessings and privileges of this new covenant may be in like manner, and for the same reason, ascribed to the great fact or event whereby it was ratified. Thus, if we have redemption or expiation¹, even the forgiveness of sins, it is through the blood of CHRIST that we have it:—if we are reconciled and brought nigh to God², instead of being as before, at a distance, and deplorably alienated from him, it is by the death of his SON, by the blood of CHRIST:—if we are justified from the guilt of past sins³; if we are sanctified or consecrated as a holy people to GOD⁴; if we receive the adoption of Sons, and become heirs of GOD⁵; if we gain in this world the solid hope, and at length the actual possession of eternal life⁶; and if, as a pledge and earnest of our future inheritance, and a mean of qualifying us for the same, we obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit⁷; all these honours and advantages, and in one word, all the riches of the Gospel covenant⁸, are conveyed to us through the death of CHRIST, not only for the reasons,

¹ Col. i. 14. ² Rom. v. 10. Eph. ii. 13. ³ Rom. v. 9.

⁴ Heb. x. 10, 29. ⁵ Gal. iv. 4, 5. ⁶ John vi. 51. ⁷ 1 Theff. v. 10.

⁸ Gal. iii. 13, 14. John xvi. 7. ⁹ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

sons, and in the way formerly explained, but also because it was the mean appointed by God, to ratify, and render valid, the gracious covenant wherein they are promised.

No one can think it strange that those benefits should be ascribed to the seal of the covenant, which really belong to the covenant itself*, or rather to the mercy of God, who is the Author of it: And since, according to his sovereign appointment, the covenant of his grace was made valid by the blood of the Mediator, are not the blessings of the covenant justly represented as the effects of that blood?—Baptism is said to save us^r, though our salvation is rather the effect of the doctrine of which baptism is the sign, or more properly still, of the power and goodness of God. So our deliverance or purgation from the guilt of sin, flows in reality from the covenant which promises and assures us of pardon upon repentance; and yet we often find it ascribed to the blood that

* 1 Pet. iii. 21.

* * Thus, Isa. xxx. 1. what we translate *that cover with a covering*, literally means *who pour out a libation*, and that is another expression for ratifying a covenant. Sacrifice and libation were ceremonies constantly used in ancient times, by most nations, in the ratifying of covenants: A libation therefore is used for ratifying a covenant, as, in Greek, the word *προσθήκη*, for the same reason, stands for both.

Bp. Lowth's Translation of Isaiah.

that was shed to ratify the covenant. When the Apostle declares that *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin*^s, his meaning is, that our sins are pardoned by virtue, and according to the terms, of a gracious covenant ratified by CHRIST's blood, and confirming the remission of sins to all the penitent and obedient. He adds, that *if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*^s. So that what was before ascribed to the blood of CHRIST, is here resolved into the faithfulness and justice of GOD, who having made this covenant with us, will not fail to perform what he hath promised in it. Thus, also, when we are said in one place to be *justified by Christ's blood*^u, and in another to be *justified freely by the grace of God*^v, both assertions are true, and the one explains the other. In fact it is GOD that justifieth, and who can forgive sins but GOD only? But he justifies us according to the terms of a merciful covenant, confirmed by the blood of his dear Son. And hence the Apostle to the Hebrews argues from the remission of sins promised in the Gospel, that under this constitution *there is no more offering for sin*^w, as there was so frequently under the law.

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^s 1 John i. 7. ^t Verse 9. ^u Rom. v. 9. ^v Chap. iii. 24.

^w Heb. x. 15, — 18.

The reason is, because this one offering serves to ratify an everlasting covenant of remission of all sins past, present, and future, to all men in all ages and countries, who can be brought to comply with the terms of the Gospel.

BUT will any one infer from thence, that he may hope to be accepted of GOD through the blood of CHRIST, though he continue to live in sin? Would that be to understand the nature of the Gospel covenant aright? What do I say? Would it not be a gross and impious perversion of it? Would it not be to trample under foot the SON of GOD, and to count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing? Let no man deceive himself. The blood of CHRIST ratifies the threatnings, as well as the promises of the Gospel; and if we treat it in that manner, it will not to us confirm a covenant of life, but will, on the contrary, be the seal of our damnation.— And very justly. The blood of CHRIST ought to cleanse us from all sin in our future practice, at the same time that it assures us of the remission of sins that are past. It ought to purge our lives from iniquity, as well as our consciences from the sense of guilt. Seeing his blood was shed for us, and that he hath redeemed and bought us
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at so dear a price, if we would enjoy the benefit of that redemption, we must no longer live unto ourselves, but unto him that loved us, and gave himself for us. We must be guided by his precepts, animated by his Spirit, and formed upon the model of his holiness; otherwise, whatever relations we bear, and whatever love we profess to him now, he will say to us in the final judgement, *Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity*^{*}. And that we may the more believe him, he hath ratified on the cross all his sentences, whether of terror to the wicked, or of encouragement and comfort to the righteous. Not to mention, as before shewn, that he hath, in virtue of his death, obtained power to execute every sentence of either kind; to take vengeance on them that obey not the Gospel, and to crown his followers with a blessed immortality.

‘GRANT me, O Father of lights! the
 ‘spirit of wisdom and revelation in the
 ‘knowledge of thy SON, at least a mind
 ‘well instructed in the terms of the Gospel,
 ‘and a heart disposed to the faithful per-
 ‘formance of them.—How admirable is
 ‘thy condescension and grace, in entering
 ‘into such a covenant with sinful men!—
 ‘where

^{*} Matth. vii. 21,—23.

‘ where thou, to whom all things are sub-
‘ ject by the condition of their nature, ob-
‘ ligest thyself to me, as well as me to thee ;
‘ where the blessings thou promigest are un-
‘ speakably great, while the service required
‘ of me is not only practicable, but light
‘ and easy ; and where the very method of
‘ ratifying this gracious paction, is calculat-
‘ ed to remove every doubt and anxiety from
‘ my mind with regard to my future happi-
‘ ness, except what may arise from my own
‘ weakness, inconstancy, and undutiful be-
‘ haviour ! Even for these a sufficient remedy
‘ is provided by thy goodness, if I will but
‘ use it.—On thy part, O gracious Father !
‘ I must confess, that the covenant is well
‘ ordered in all things, and sure : Let it not
‘ fail, I beseech thee, on the part of thy
‘ servant. Suffer me not to frustrate the
‘ grace of my GOD. Preserve me from all
‘ vain and delusive hopes, not founded on
‘ thy promises. Let me never seek excuses
‘ for my sins, or pretexts to justify my ne-
‘ gligence, remissness, and sloth : but enable
‘ me always to will and to do those things
‘ which are agreeable to thee ; that in the
‘ obedience of thy just commandments, I
‘ may obtain the fulfilment of thy glorious
‘ promises, through JESUS CHRIST. Amen.’

CHAPTER II.

*Shewing how CHRIST's Death removes the
Depravity of Sin.*

WE now proceed to the other general head into which we divided the Doctrine concerning the Death of CHRIST; which is to consider the tendency and effects of that dispensation with regard to the removal of the corruption or depravity of sin; or, how it conduces to the reformation of sinners, and the bringing them to the love and practice of solid piety.—And here a brighter and less dubious light opens to our view. We are now come to a branch of our subject, where truth shines forth with irresistible splendor, and leaves scarce any room for cavil or contradiction, even to the most perverse minds. All the warm controversies which have taken place among Christians, concerning the doctrine of a Mediator between God and Man, ‘ relate only, as an ‘ ingenious writer * observes, to what was ‘ done on GOD’s part in the appointment, ‘ and on the Mediator’s in the execution of ‘ it. For, what is required of us in consequence of this dispensation, is another subject,

* Butler. Analogy, P. II. c. v.

‘ject, in which none can complain for want
‘of information.’ I will add, that this is
that branch of the subject which we are most
concerned with, which we have most need
to study, and which we ought to prove by
our own experience: For, as to the former
part of it, though one scheme no doubt gives
juster views of the character and government
of God than another, as well as of the ge-
nuine sense of Scripture, yet upon the whole,
little more seems necessary than only to be
assured of the fact *, that the guilt of sin is,
and shall be remitted, through the death and
sacrifice of CHRIST, to every sincere penitent.
Is not this knowing enough for the encour-
agement of repentance, and the hope and
comfort of the sinner who betakes himself
to it? At least it might be expected, that
while Christians are agreed upon this great
point, (as they all are), their contentions
should not be very violent, tho’ they differ
in

* ‘As to the peculiar benefits of the Gospel, are they
‘not declared without obscurity? Can you read the Gos-
‘pel, and doubt whether CHRIST died for you,—whether
‘God will grant pardon to the penitent, or his assistance
‘to those who ask it,—whether he will reward all those in
‘glory, who continue the faithful disciples of his Son?—
‘What other revelation do we want, or can we desire, in
‘these great and weighty concerns? Or, what is there
‘wanting to make up a complete system of religion?’

Bp. Sherlock's Discourses, Vol. II. Disc. I.

in their ways of speaking, or even in their sentiments, about the manner in which CHRIST's death conduces to the remission of sins, or where its efficacy lies with regard to that matter. They might content themselves with following peaceably their common rule, and adhering as strictly as possible to the facts and phraseology of Scripture *, when they speak of it, without imposing their minuter explications on one another. But how CHRIST's death conduces to the cure and remedy of moral evil, or the reclaiming of men from the practice of sin, this ought to be well understood, and sensibly felt by every Christian who would rightly improve the humiliations of our Saviour.—It shall therefore be my endeavour, through the help of GOD, to point out the various motives and arguments which this dispensation yields, to confirm our faith, to conciliate our love, to per-

* ‘ In doctrines of supernatural revelation, (says Dr Whichcot in his Aphorisms), ‘ we shall do well to direct ‘ our apprehensions, and to regulate our expressions, by ‘ the words of Scripture.’ And again, in the same Book, ‘ So far as it is beyond the text, it is man-made divinity, ‘ about which we shall always differ, because there is no ‘ authority to determine us.’—To which we may add, that the using of words and phrases unknown to Scripture, to express our religious tenets, seems to be what the Apostle to the Hebrews, c. xiii. v. 9. warns us against, under the notion of *strange doctrines*, as strangers are commonly known by their language or dialect.

persuade us to repent and turn to God, to excite us to the fervent practice of all holiness and righteousness; in a word, to animate our hope, and fill us with a holy peace and joy, amidst all the afflictions of this life: That is, I propose to shew how the sufferings and death of CHRIST tend, when seriously considered, to transform sinners into real saints, and from the first beginnings of the christian life, to carry them on to its highest perfection.

THESE particulars will take up five sections.

SECTION I.

CHRIST'S *Death a Confirmation of our Faith.*

THE foundation of the christian character is faith*, or believing *that Jesus is the Son of God^a*; which, by necessary consequence, leads to a belief of all the doctrines and promises of GOD, delivered by him, and to the diligent performance of all good works. By this faith we are justified†, and become the children of GOD; and without it, far from being advanced to the honours of GOD's children, we can neither repent and live virtuously, nor be at all benefited by the discoveries which GOD hath made to us of his holy will. *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God^b. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God^c.* On the other hand, *Who is he, asks the Apostle, that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God^d?*

LET

^a John xx. 31. ^b 1 John iv. 15. ^c Chap. v. 1. ^d Verse 5.

* See Mr Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity.

† Dean Swift affirmed, that 'To say a man is bound to believe, is neither truth nor sense.' See his *Thoughts on Religion*, vol. xvi. p. 43.—The assertion is too general and unqualified. He surely did not mean it of those great and fundamental truths of religion which are clearly discovered

LET us think, then, how well this wonderful dispensation of the humble life, and miserable death of our Redeemer, is adapted to beget and cherish a sincere faith in us. His death alone, duly attended to, has a powerful tendency that way; but much more when considered in connection with the life of poverty and affliction which led to it, and which was in effect the principal cause of it; since, if JESUS had appeared in the power and splendour of an earthly monarch, there is no doubt but the Jews would have gladly embraced him as their promised MESSIAH, and would never have sought his crucifixion.

A a 2

The

to men, either by reason or revelation, such as, that there is a GOD, that JESUS is the CHRIST, &c.; for, these we are as much bound to believe, as we are to make a right use of our reason, or of any other gift of GOD; and the disbelief of them, against all the arguments by which they press themselves upon our minds, must arise from a very criminal carelessness, neglect, disaffection, or perverseness^a. Such incredulity is a fault of the will, justly deserving punishment^b. Men addicted to vice, can never heartily believe the Gospel^c. It reproves and condemns them, and they have an interest to support in opposition to it. Wherever there is good reason for believing, we are certainly *bound to believe*. It is probable the ingenious Dean, in the above remark, had an eye only to those human doctrines and traditions in religion, which are supported by no reasonable evidence, and where the defect of evidence is attempted to be made up by dreadful threatnings against all who presume to doubt of them.

^a 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. John xv. 22,—24.

^b Rom. i. 20. Mark xvi. 16.

^c John iii. 20.

The very contrary, however, is a juster reason for believing in him. His lowly and afflicted condition here below, both in life and death, tended mightily, and must always tend, to produce in the minds of considerate men, a firm and rational conviction of his heavenly mission. This effect it is likely to have many ways, chiefly these following: By encouraging the free examination of his credentials; by leaving no room to suspect him of worldly and ambitious views; by affording the utmost evidence of his uprightness and sincerity; by serving as a necessary step to his resurrection, the most glorious proof of his divine mission; by fulfilling the ancient prophecies respecting the MESSIAH; and finally, by making the arm of Omnipotence more manifest in his exaltation.

IN the *first* place, the poverty and humble appearance of the SON of GOD on earth, afforded every one who saw him, full liberty to examine his doctrines, and to try his pretensions to a divine mission. External pomp and splendour would have kept men at an awful distance from his person: A few only of the Great, would have enjoyed the benefit of his conversation and instructions: Ordinary men could scarce have approached him
without

without fear and trembling: their tongues would have faltered in his presence; and all their enquiries and objections would have been silenced or suppressed by the dread of his authority. They might indeed have submitted to his doctrine; probably many would:—but their submission in this case would have been very suspicious, and would have looked more like a servile respect paid to worldly grandeur, than a sincere and voluntary homage yielded to divine truth. And how would our modern infidels have exulted against the Gospel, if it had been introduced into the world in that manner? How would the honest believer have trembled for his hope? But, by the outward state in which our SAVIOUR gave himself to the world, all sinister suspicions of the weakness of his cause are effectually obviated: no unfair advantage is taken of human infirmity: the minds of men are not dazzled with the appendages of worldly grandeur, nor bewitched with the airs of mystery, and distance, and reserve; nor terrified with the dread of present punishment, in case of neglect or contradiction. Conscious of real, celestial greatness, Jesus appears among them as their common friend, in the form of a servant; not seeking to be ministered unto, but to minister; inviting all to come to him,

without exception of the meanest; conversing with them, and instructing them in the most meek, and lowly, and familiar manner; and submitting his discourses and miracles to the free examination of prudence and candour, and even to the keen searching eye of malice and envy. *Which of you convinceth me of sin,* (says he to his enemies)? *and if I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me?* Thus nobody was tempted to profess faith in him, without good reason for it; and in the same way no doubt, that is, in the way of rational conviction and free enquiry; he desired his religion to be propagated and supported in all ages, that it might not be thought to owe its existence or its safety to the arm of flesh. Again,

2d, THIS humble and afflicted condition of the SON of GOD, took away all ground for suspecting him of any worldly or ambitious views, any design of making religion subservient to his temporal interests. No earthly advantage did he acquire, and as little did he desire or expect, by publishing his doctrine among men. He encountered daily contradiction and abuse for doing good. Intent only on promoting the benefit of others, by all his divine gifts and powers, his own life was spent in poverty,

* John viii. 46.

verty, and ended on a cross. That such calamities awaited him, he knew from the first, and never stepped aside from the path of duty to avoid the worst of them. It was likewise one great object of his care, to prepare his disciples for following steadily the same worthy course, by warning them before-hand of the sufferings which they were destined to endure in this world after him^f. Let unbelievers accuse any religion, and any teachers they please, of worldly designs; they must needs be silent here, or confess that the views of JESUS CHRIST were pure and heavenly. No part of his conduct favoured any thing of the spirit of this world, or of those impostors who employ religion as a cloak for their covetousness, and a step to earthly power and grandeur, but was in every respect inconsistent therewith.—And it is too obvious to need being mentioned, that no other spirit than that which influenced his conduct, ever did, or ever can prevail in any of his sincere and faithful followers^g. Farther,

3d, WE have observed, that the sufferings of CHRIST in his life, and above all at his death, afford the most incontestable proof of his truth and integrity, in all that he said and did. His doctrine every where requires

A a 4 an

^f See John xv. 18, 19.

^g 1 Cor. ii. 12.

an inviolable regard to truth, and denounces the severest punishments against liars. It likewise prescribes the best rules to guard the simple from being seduced by the crafty, in matters of religion; and it condemns an easy credulity, as much as an obstinate unbelief. He published it in the face of great opposition, and many discouragements from men in power; and at length deliberately sealed it with his blood, being long and fully apprized of the sad catastrophe. This is what no deceiver ever did, with regard to any doctrines invented or propagated by him. Grievous sufferings, and even death, may have been sometimes willingly undergone for errors, but not for errors known by the sufferers to be such. JESUS avowed himself to be the CHRIST, the SON of GOD. If that was a falsehood, he could not but know it to be so. Yet when the cross was presented to him, he retracted nothing that he had said, but, on the contrary, appealed to all his sayings and actions for the vindication of his innocence, and remained firm to the last in the same good confession; thereby shewing his veracity to be above suspicion, if any thing in nature could make it so.—And it must be owned, that had he not been tried in that manner, and called to suffer as he did, we should have wanted an argument so effectual
to

to shut the mouths of adversaries upon this point, and to establish the faith of CHRIST's friends; which may be one reason why his passion is represented as an event so necessary in the divine scheme of the Gospel. Be this as it will, we can now justly glory in him as *the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness*^b, or Martyr, since he hath born testimony to what he taught, by laying down his life in confirmation of it; and we may well receive his *Blood* as a third concurring witness with *the Water, and the Spirit*, to evince his being indeed the MESSIAH, the SON of GODⁱ.

THESE arguments, however, may seem to go no farther than only to satisfy the minds of reasonable men as to the integrity and disinterestedness of the LORD JESUS, in common with other Martyrs who followed him; and this is partly true, since the suffering of persecution, and a violent death, was in both an equal proof of sincerity. Yet even here, there are differences which ought not to be overlooked; such as, that he was the first and greatest of that illustrious band who died for the truth; that his example led the way, and animated and drew after it all the rest; that the plan of religion, for which he and they suffered, was his, not their's; that his

his sufferings in general were more bitter than their's, and his behaviour under them more noble and perfect; and finally, that though they might be, in some instances, mistaken in what they professed, it is scarce conceivable that he could be so*.—But we proceed to some other evidences afforded by his death, to ground our faith upon, which all must allow to be more peculiar and remarkable. For,

4th, THE death of JESUS CHRIST was an event indispensibly necessary to make room for his resurrection from the dead, which is the capital proof of his religion, and the chief argument that persuaded the world to embrace it. This was the sign of the Prophet Jonas, to which our LORD always referred the Jews, when they demanded proofs of his being the CHRIST^k; and this also he promised to his own Disciples^l, as often as he took occasion to warn them against the scandal and distress of his approaching crucifixion. If, after these promises, he had not risen from the dead, his own Disciples, as well as the unbelieving Jews, would have had

^k Matth. xii. 39, 40. Chap. xvi. 4. ^l Mark ix. 31.

* These are the remarks of a very dear and valuable friend, the Rev. Dr James Woddrow, who, if he had undertaken to handle this whole subject, would have rendered it unnecessary for me to attempt it.

had reason to think themselves deceived by him; and St Paul acknowledges, that in this case our faith would have been vain. But it is certain he could not have risen, if he had not first died. Without his death, there would have been no place for this great and decisive proof of his mission. For this reason too, it was requisite that his death should be public and conspicuous, and that multitudes of people should be witnesses of it, to the end that the fact might be ascertained beyond all possibility of doubt. Thus the death of CHRIST confirms our faith, by being the necessary prelude to his resurrection. But,

5th, It is an important consideration on this head, that by the humble circumstances, the afflictions, and death of our LORD, the ancient prophecies respecting the MESSIAH were fulfilled, and JESUS of NAZARETH was demonstrated to be the person. Not only the bulk of the Jewish Nation, but the very Friends and Disciples of JESUS, were at first greatly scandalized at the poverty and meanness of his outward appearance, and the ignominy of his cross, which were in their eyes sufficient to outweigh all the proofs he could produce of his being the MESSIAH, or which at least damped exceedingly the flattering hopes they had

had conceived from him^m. There was no point, therefore, more constantly and firmly established in the discourses and reasonings, whether of our LORD himself during his personal ministry on earth, or of his Apostles and Ministers after his ascension, when their minds were duly illuminated, than this of the agreement of his humiliations with the ancient oracles of GOD. *O Fools*, said JESUS to the Disciples of Emmaus, *and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his gloryⁿ? I told you before*, added he, *that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me^o. Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day^p. And before his death, he asks, if he were to be exempted from any circumstance of the pain and ignominy he underwent, *How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be^q?* In like manner, the Apostle Peter (to mention no more) says, *But those things which God had shewed by the mouth of all his Prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled^r.* Testimonies of the like kind occur every where in the New Testament; and to be*

^m Luke xxiv. 21. Acts i. 6.ⁿ Luke xxiv. 25, 26.^o Verse 44.^p Verse 46.^q Matth. xxvi. 54.^r Acts iii. 18.

be convinced of the truth and justice of them, we need only turn our eyes for a moment to some of the old prophecies.

It is not intended here to recite the numerous predictions, which many ages before the appearance of CHRIST, foretold with an astonishing clearness and particularity, the time, the manner, and the place of his birth; his family, his character, his office, and the success that his religion should meet with in the world. Our subject confines us to those of them which speak of the treatment he should receive in his own person, which foretell his death and resurrection; and even of these I shall only touch at a few.

Thus it was predicted, that the MESSIAH *should be cut off, though not for himself*^s; or should suffer a violent and untimely death, *making his soul an offering for sin*^t; that the hand of worldly power should arise against him, and smite him^v; and that the procurers of his death should find cause afterwards to lament it bitterly^w: that this last violence against him should be preceded by many outrages, inflicted on him on account of his lowly condition; there being nothing about him, either to strike worldly men with
awe,

^s Dan. ix. 26. ^t Isa. liii. 10. ^v Zech. xiii. 7. ^w Chap. xii. 10.

awe, or to allure their affections; as in him they could see *no form nor comeliness, no beauty that they should desire him. Hence he was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: They hid as it were their faces from him; He was despised, and they esteemed him not*^x.

THE patience with which he should endure all his sufferings, is described in these terms: *He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; He hid not his face from shame and spitting*¹. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth*². That his sufferings were altogether unmerited on his part, but designed and adapted to promote the good of others, was also expressly prophesied. *Surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions: He was bruised for our iniquities: The chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; and with his stripes we are healed*³.

THESE and the like things are foretold of Him, who, according to the same oracles, was to be exalted and extolled, and made
very

^x Isa. liii. 2, 3. ¹ Chap. 1. 6. ² Chap. liii. 7. ³ Verse 5.

very high^b, to sprinkle many nations, and to receive the humble homage of Kings;—of Him, who after making his life an offering for sin, was to *see his seed, to prolong his days, and to see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand; yea to see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; and by his knowledge to justify many, bearing (or carrying away) their iniquities^c*;—of Him, in fine, who was to sit upon the throne of his father David for ever^d, and of the increase of whose government and peace there should be no end. All which corresponds entirely to what the inspired Psalmist had before said of him, that he should *drink of the brook in the way, (like a humble weary traveller, or a combatant in the hot pursuit of his enemies), and should therefore lift up the head, and take his place at God's right hand, till all his enemies were made his footstool^e*.

I FORBEAR to repeat the detail of his sufferings, as delineated in the prophetic writings; the causeless hatred and persecution of men, particularly of the great and powerful^f; the treachery of one of his most intimate friends^g; the price for which he was sold into the hands of his mortal enemies^h, with the use which was made of that money; their

^b Isa. lii. 13,—15. ^c Chap. liii. 10, 11. ^d Chap. ix. 7. ^e Psal. cx.

^f Psal. lxix. 4. Psal. xxxv. 19. ^g Psal. xli. 9. Psal. lv. 12,—14.

^h Zech. xi. 12, 13.

their crafty insidious conduct, and their encouraging, if not procuring, of false witnesses to accuse him; the unjust sentence which was passed upon him^b; the piercing of his hands and feet^c; the intolerable anguish of his cross, and the casting lots upon his vesture^d; his suffering along with malefactors^e; the vinegar which was given him by his crucifiers to quench his thirst^f; their insulting speeches to him while under the agonies of the cross^g; and lastly, his quick sensibility to the various aggravated pains which were inflicted on him^h, and earnest application to his GOD and FATHER for a speedy dismissal from themⁱ.—On these and the like passages I do not enlarge, because most of them were mentioned before in the history of his passion; and because it is probable some of them were not intended by the Holy Spirit as direct predictions of his sufferings, but were applied to his case in a secondary sense, by way of accommodation. Every one, however, must be struck with the wonderful coincidence of language, and of facts, in this case, which is such as was probably never found in any other; and must hence be inclined to think they were designedly adapted the one to the other,

by

^b Psal. xxxv. 7,—12. ^c Isa. liii. 8. ^d Psal. xxii. 16,—18.

^e Isa. liii. 12.

^f Psal. lxix. 21. ^g Psal. xxii. 8.

^h Verse 11,—15.

ⁱ Verse 1.

by him who *sheweth the things that are to come hereafter*^a, and *performeth the counsel of his messengers*^r.—What other events are there recorded in history, to which all these prophetic descriptions could be so properly applied, or in which they are so exactly fulfilled?

UPON the whole, whatever the prophetic oracles had spoken, whether concerning the abasement or exaltation of the MESSIAH, his labours or his triumphs, his sufferings or his glory, is all verified in the sufferings of JESUS of NAZARETH, and in no other person. Without him, these oracles would have remained for ever inexplicable, and might even with some appearance of reason have been accused of falsehood: But, applied to him, they are all consistent, and not obscure: the truth of GOD is vindicated: the belief of his Providence is established: the reality of prophetic inspiration is put beyond all doubt; and the sufferings of our Blessed SAVIOUR, far from standing as an objection against his claim to be the CHRIST, appear absolutely necessary to shew the justice of it. Had not JESUS suffered, as he did, he could not have been the MESSIAH promised to the House of Israel; and by his

B b

death,

^a Isa. xli. 23.^r Chap. xliv. 26.

death, he confirmed the truth of the ancient Scriptures, as well as of his own Doctrine.—One thing more remains on this head, which is,

6th, THAT the mean and afflicted condition of the LORD JESUS on earth, rendered the evidence of his divine mission apparently more illustrious and striking; since it was followed with so great glory in his exaltation, and in the success of his religion. The more weak and contemptible he was in the eyes of men, the more manifestly does *the excellency of power*^s which attended him, appear to be of GOD.—That mighty men should do great things, and attain to great honour and renown, is no ways surprising. That an Alexander, for instance, should subdue the East with a veteran and well-disciplined army of hardy Macedonians; or a Julius Cæsar change the government of Rome, after he had so long commanded her armies; we do not wonder. Nor are we at a loss to account for the success of a Mahomet propagating his imposture with fire and sword, in an ignorant and feeble age, after he had by alliances, and by the prospect of worldly power and riches, engaged a few men of ability to make

^s 2 Cor. iv. 7.

make his cause their own. But that a poor, despised, persecuted Galilean, should in a short time, and without any external violence, change the ancient established religions of both Jews and Gentiles; that he who was condemned and crucified as a malefactor, should soon come to be generally regarded as the Prince of life, and the Author of salvation to the human race; that one who lived in such poverty as JESUS did, and under such reproach, should be elevated to a new and hitherto unimagined pre-eminence above men and angels; in a word, that *the Stone which the builders despised, should be made the Head of the corner*—This doth clearly surpass all the wit and power of man; it is after a peculiar manner the LORD's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

IN all these different ways, then, do the sufferings of our SAVIOUR contribute to establish our faith in him: And I may now appeal to any man of plain sense and candour, whether the cross of CHRIST, which was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, doth not afford us much more ground to believe and obey him, than we could have had without it, supposing all other circumstances to be the same? Is it

B b 2

any

† Psal. cxviii. 22, 23.

any objection against Jesus, that while he devoted his labours to the good of others, he sought no temporal advantage to himself? or, that, not content with giving lessons of patient virtue to mankind, he exemplified them in his own conduct? Was there ever a cheat in the world, or a wrong-headed enthusiast, who taught a doctrine of unblemished truth and purity with regard to morals, and lived according to it, and willingly submitted to a cruel and ignominious death in confirmation of it? or, is it compatible with human nature that such things can exist? Have such multitudes of wise and good men (perhaps it would not be presumption to say, the wisest and the best) been induced, out of their own free choice, though often much against their worldly interest, to embrace his religion; many of them also, in imitation of their Master, to attest it with their blood; and this on slight grounds, and without any solid reason?—These, and such like obvious questions, should not be overlooked, or left unsolved by those who attempt to account for the introduction of christianity into the world by mere human means. What has been said, however, will, I trust, help to satisfy impartial minds, that instead of being offended in CHRIST, or ashamed of him on account of his humiliations, we
have

have just cause to glory in him, and to be more firmly attached to him, for this very reason.

Now, the faith of our LORD JESUS CHRIST is in itself a living, active, and immortal principle, the beginning and the finishing instrument of the christian character. It is it that forms and animates the whole of our spiritual life. By it, we are regenerated, and become babes in CHRIST; and by it, we arrive to the stature of perfect men in him. It makes CHRIST live in us, and us in him; nor can it be ever wanting to us, or die in us, without our own fault. It will not permit us to hold the truth in unrighteousness. It will not suffer any vice to remain in us, any sin to be unrepented of, or any good work in our power to be neglected. Particularly, it worketh by love: charity is at once its noblest fruit, and the surest proof of its being alive and sound. Faith is a shield, to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; and it supplies us with spiritual armour, to overcome all the temptations of the world. It supports our hope, and fills us with holy peace and joy. Let us hold it with a good conscience, and it will not fail to make us in every respect what CHRIST our Lord would have us to be. —And, ‘I beseech thee, O Father Almighty!

‘ by the influences of thy good Spirit, to
‘ cherish and increase in me, evermore, this
‘ divine and saving faith, of which thou
‘ affordeſt me ſo many ſolid arguments,
‘ even in thoſe things which ſeem at firſt
‘ fight to oppoſe it, the humiliations and
‘ croſs of my SAVIOUR. Much cauſe, I con-
‘ feſs, have all men to embrace and to glory
‘ in a religion, which is not afraid to ſubmit
‘ the proofs of its divinity to their moſt ex-
‘ act and careful examination. Let me not,
‘ O gracious GOD! be inattentive to theſe
‘ proofs, or prejudiced againſt them, by
‘ motives which my heart dares not avow.
‘ Thy truth will not be denied, ſo far as
‘ it is neceſſary to humble minds, ſincerely
‘ diſpoſed to ſeek and to obey it. Having
‘ placed my faith upon this ſure ground,
‘ may I be enabled to build myſelf up on it,
‘ and to add every chriſtian virtue to it,
‘ until I become meet for a happy entrance
‘ into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord
‘ and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. Amen.’

SECT. II.

SECTION II.

Christ's Death a Motive of Love.

LET us next consider, as proposed, how much the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer tend to conciliate and strengthen our love; love, I mean, to GOD and CHRIST, and to one another. It is the character of true faith, that it *worketh by love*^a; and therefore, whatever serves to produce and quicken the former principle of conduct, must have the like effect, at least indirectly, with regard to the latter. But, besides this, the sufferings of CHRIST, duly contemplated, have a direct and powerful tendency to awaken in our hearts, the sentiments of an ingenuous love, the sweetest and most vigorous principle of virtue that we are capable of, and what would hardly be resisted by the most obstinate sinners, if they could be made to feel it, and did not contrive to forget, or turn away their thoughts from it. This opens to our view, a rich and ample field of pleasing instruction, which ought not to be slightly passed over, though it be, like most others belonging to practical religion, a beaten field, and though our limits require as much haste as possible.

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^a Gal. v. 6.

I. IN the *first* place, we may ask, Could there be a more affecting manifestation of the love and mercy of GOD the FATHER towards us?—And if the Great Parent of the universe had searched the councils of his wisdom, on purpose to find out the most effectual method to convince us of his care for us, his compassion of our miseries, and his desire of our salvation; what stronger proof could he have afforded (I mean according to our weak conceptions, and I should rather say, what stronger proof could we have desired) of these friendly dispositions in our behalf, than the giving up of his only begotten SON to the death of the cross for us? *Lord! what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him, after this manner?*

HENCE St Paul speaks of the love of GOD to men, as making its first appearance under the Gospel dispensation; for, says he, *After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man APPEARED^b*; as if it had never appeared before; as if all that GOD had done for mankind in former ages, had indicated nothing on his part but neglect, indifference, or displeasure; and this had been the first discovery of his good will

^b Tit. iii. 4.

will to the human race:—and comparatively speaking, it certainly was so; for, tho' God had never *left himself without witness*^c, and had already exhibited fundry proofs of his care and love towards mankind, it is in this last dispensation that Divine Grace shines forth in its full dimensions, in its *length, and breadth, and height, and depth*^d; and comes clothed with every quality that can possibly recommend or endear it to the hearts of men.

IN various ways hath GOD magnified the riches of his grace and kindness towards men, through JESUS CHRIST; by the value and importance of the benefits which he bestows; by their suitableness to the condition and necessities of those to whom they are offered; by the gratuitous and undeserved liberality with which they are granted; by the extensiveness of their communication; but, above all, by the method he hath taken to secure men's acceptance of them, and to render them effectual.—It was not only an assurance of protection during a short uncertain life in this world, that GOD intended for the portion of the Disciples of his SON; nor did he think fit to confine their hopes, and the reward of their obedience, to such

^c Acts xiv. 17.

^d Eph. iii. 18.

such things as health and length of days; to riches, honours, prosperity, and pleasure; or to any temporal good whatever; (though this also is generally theirs, as much, or more than others); but his love to them is now manifested as reaching from eternity to eternity, uninterrupted by death itself.—And in order to make men capable of it, he dispelled the hideous darkness wherein their own folly and depravity had so long involved them, brought them into a marvellous light, and furnished them with all needful instructions concerning the nature of true religion, as well as all proper motives to the practice thereof. He freely remitted all past sins to every penitent believer, and gave assurance of the like remission of all future sins, upon repentance sincerely renewed, together with allowance for every infirmity and imperfection, consistent with a prevailing habit of innocence and virtue.—And what benefits were there which mankind stood more in need of than these? What could be more desirable to them, plunged as they were into an abyss of ignorance, corruption and guilt, from which no efforts of their own could ever have relieved them, exposed to innumerable miseries, in bondage to the fear of death, perishing in their sins, and yet possessed of great capacities for moral improvement,

ment, and of an inextinguishable thirst for happiness without end?—Moreover, their conduct had been such as to merit far other treatment at the hands of a just GOD, if he had resolved to deal with them as they often did, and still do, with one another; and having made so bad an use of his former gifts, and sought out so many evil inventions, instead of new and extraordinary favours, they had reason to be apprehensive of the severest judgements. But, suspending the rigours of his justice, GOD ceased not to look upon miserable men with the indulgent eye of parental tenderness; and he at length broke forth, not in strokes of vengeance, but in expressions of love, as unmerited and unexpected, as they were necessary, seasonable, and important. Nor were they restricted as before, to one family and nation; but laid open to all, without any distinction. It was now first that GOD appeared to be, in the most emphatical sense of the words, *no respecter of persons*^c; *not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also*^d; and that men of every country and kindred under Heaven, were assured of equal access to the favour of their common Parent, if they did not exclude themselves from it by their own obstinacy and impenitence.

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^c Acts x. 34.^d Rom. iii. 29.

ALL these circumstances, no doubt, serve greatly to inhance and recommend the goodness of GOD to us, in the Gospel dispensation. But the same goodness appears still more in the means which are employed to put us in possession of such precious benefits. It is here especially, that the grace of our Heavenly Father shines with unparalleled lustre. We should certainly esteem it sufficient lenity in an earthly Potentate, if he forbore to punish a set of rebellious subjects, absolutely in his power, though he shewed them no tokens of extraordinary favour. We should think it great, if he were pleased to extend his compassion to them all, without excepting the most guilty, when they came to implore it at the foot of his throne, without unfeigned sorrow and contrition, submitting themselves to any possible conditions he should prescribe for effacing the remembrance of their past crimes : And we should the more applaud his clemency, if it appeared that the revolt of these subjects had been altogether unprovoked, and had arisen from ease, and pride, and licentiousness. But all this is nothing to the condescensions of GOD towards sinners, in the Gospel : — For, He who had no need of us, and could not be benefited by us, was pleased to court our alliance : He who had so much cause to be offended with us,

us, did not disdain to make the first advances to the offenders, in order to a reconciliation: The Sovereign Arbiter of our destiny submitted to seek us, when we thought not of him; and to invite, exhort, and press us, in the most affectionate terms, to return from darkness to light, from bondage to liberty, from disgrace and misery to true honour and happiness; and, in short, to accept of the highest favours that our nature in its best estate was capable of enjoying. *Who is a God like unto thee, O Lord! that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression? How far are thy ways above ours! Truly thou delightest in mercy.*^s

NOR was this all; for, in order to render these overtures of peace the more acceptable and successful, he sent the SON of his love, clothed with ample powers, and full of grace and truth, to solicit our acceptance of them. For this end, he declined not to make his chosen favourite, a Man of Sorrows; exposing him to more than the common calamities that flesh is heir to; leaving him, through the whole course of his benevolent services, to conflict with the obstinacy and ingratitude of sinners whom he came to save; to endure their contradictions, refusals, outrages, and persecutions; yea, and in the end, to fall a sacrifice

^s Mic. vii. 18.

sacrifice to their malice; to die at once for them, and *by* their hands, under the most aggravated circumstances of pain and ignominy, which a real sinner, which a malefactor of the worst kind, could suffer!

JUDGE from hence, my soul, what a tender care and pity the Father of Mercies retained for us men, after all our provocations, and how much he desired our salvation! It was this, indeed, that gave emphasis and perfection to his love. *GOD SO loved the world, that He gave his Only Begotten SON, (delivered him up to affliction and death), that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life^h. Herein is love, not that we loved GOD, but that He loved us, and sent his SON to be the propitiation for our sinsⁱ.*

—But what need I recite particular texts? The whole New Testament abounds with the praises of this admirable love of GOD, even the Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and celebrates it in every page. The very greatness of it hath furnished some with a pretence for disputing its existence, and representing it as incredible.

WHEREFORE was such goodness on the part of GOD, manifested toward creatures so insignificant

^h John iii. 16.

ⁱ 1 John iv. 10.

insignificant and undeserving?—It is enough, as I said formerly, if we are well assured of the fact, though we be not able to fathom all the reasons of it: But one reason is obvious, that it was with a view to ensure, as far as possible, the success of GOD's gracious counsels in our behalf; for, even they who have despised other Prophets, *will*, said he, *reverence my SON*^k. It was in order to persuade us the more effectually to hear and comply with his will, published and confirmed by so great a Messenger: It was to overcome our evil with good, and subdue our enmity by acts of the most surprising benevolence: It was to *draw us to himself with cords of a man, with bands of love*^l; and at the same time to make suitable provision for our actually receiving, in proportion to our capacities and qualifications, all the happiness which his immense love had prepared for us.

THE riches of Divine Grace in CHRIST may well excite our admiration, but ought to meet with no opposition in our minds. It was great, to reserve forgiveness for sinners, when they should become penitent and dutiful;—greater still, to prepare immortal rewards for them; but, greatest of all, to de-
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^k Matth. xxi. 37.^l Hos. xi. 4.

vise and execute the most proper means for bringing the degenerate race of men to that temper. And, strange as it may seem, here lay the main difficulty :—to make us attend to our true interest; to procure our acceptance of the most precious gifts of Heaven; to prevail on us to lay aside our enmity to the GOD of our salvation! This was more than the conferring of all Gospel-benefits besides. This required, if I may so speak, the most painful exertions of Divine Love; and it was for this chiefly, that GOD *spared not his own SON, but freely gave Him up unto death for us all^m*. After this, we must acknowledge, that whatever becomes of us, GOD hath omitted nothing to work upon the ingenuity, or engage the gratitude, and love, and ready obedience, of reasonable men. —But here let us stop a moment, to make a few reflections. And,

FIRST, Let us learn to give unto GOD our Father in Heaven, the just tribute of our praises for his amazing grace in this dispensation. Here surely we have reason to say, more than in any other instance, *O that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of menⁿ!* And, *O give thanks unto God,*
for

^m Rom. viii. 32.ⁿ Psal. cvii. 8.

for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever! Unto the GOD of Gods, and LORD of Lords, let us give thanks°, for he is the original Author of our salvation!—The obligations we lie under to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, are indeed great and unspeakable, as shall afterwards be shewn; but to GOD, even His and our Father, we are first and chiefly indebted for every Gospel blessing; and to Him, therefore, should the gratitude of our hearts be primarily and ultimately offered up, through CHRIST. This is a truth so often and so clearly held up to our eyes in the New Testament, that it may seem not a little surprising it should ever have been one moment overlooked by any Christian, when speaking on this subject. And yet it hath not been uncommon among Christians (without any bad design, we may presume, and perhaps with a sincere intention of honouring CHRIST) to represent the FATHER of all as acting even in the Gospel of his Grace, according to the rules of a rigorous and inflexible justice*,

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or

° Psal. cxxxvi. 1. &c.

* The punishment of sin is not represented in Scripture as the necessary effect of the justice of GOD, but rather of his severity, wrath, vengeance, &c. Rom. xi. 22. And though these are never exercised by him without justice, Rom. iii. 5. yet justice does not require them to be exercised when the sinner repents. In that case, his justice is pacified, and he delights to grant pardon and forgiveness, Isa. lv. 7.—Dan. ix. 7, 9.—1 John i. 9.

or rather an implacable vengeance ; as One who would never have had compassion on the guilty and miserable race of men, unless it had been reluctantly extorted from him by a third party ; and who would never have shewn them the least favour, without the payment of a full equivalent ; hardly induced to spare penitent sinners, by the importunate intercessions of his SON ; and not till this Intercessor had consented to suffer, and had suffered in reality, all the punishment that was due to the most impenitent. —But whatever notions men may form of these high and abstruse points, they should be careful not to entertain any thoughts injurious to the Greatest and Best of Beings, the GOD of Grace and Consolation, who knows our frame, who remembers that we are but dust, and is unwilling that any of us should perish : They should acknowledge with the Apostle, that *all things are of GOD, who hath reconciled us to Himself by JESUS CHRIST^p ; by whom we ought to offer the sacrifice of praise to GOD continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his Name^q.*

2. *Secondly*, WE may from hence draw a powerful argument, to persuade those who are yet in their sins, to consider their ways, and save themselves by a timely repentance.

For,

^p 1 Cor. v. 18.

^q Heb. xiii. 15.

For, you see how the case stands, Brethren : It is against you only that the arrows of Divine Justice are pointed : To you alone GOD is implacable; you, I say, who knowingly commit sin : and he is implacable even to you, only while you continue in your sins. Do but sincerely repent, and you shall find the arms of his Mercy open to receive you. Like the father of the unhappy prodigal, He is ready to meet and embrace you, on your return to him.

AND if the light of faith, and of a good conscience, hath not quite forsaken you, consider for a moment what GOD ALMIGHTY has done to procure this return, of so little importance to him, but so necessary for you. He hath sent his only SON, to be your instructor, your pattern, your propitiation, your sure guide to life and immortality. For your sakes, he hath delivered up this best image of himself, this singular object of his affection and complacency, to a life of poverty, labour, and affliction, and a death the most infamous and excruciating. Yes, *He hath made Him to be sin for you, who knew no sin, that you might be made the righteousness of GOD in Him*. What more could be done for you ? Surely there is force enough in the

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ardours of Divine Love, to warm a cold and indifferent, nay to melt the most obdurate heart. Come hither to this celestial fire, and it will soon consume all your vices. GOD permits, yea appoints the Dearest Object of his love, to endure mortal pains and agonies, on purpose to recover you to your own true and everlasting happiness, while you, in strict justice, deserved nothing but wrath from him.

THINK of it again — How many sinners hath this love of GOD subdued? Perhaps as many as have ever attained to the grace of repentance. For, though the terrors of the LORD might disturb and check them in the career of vice, it was his love alone that could prevail on them to come, and make him a voluntary surrender of their hearts. This, at least, was always the chief attraction: And where did it ever exert its force so much as in the death of CHRIST? — Alas! sinner, if this love of GOD cannot touch you, if he cannot win you by this argument, it is to be feared no other will do, and that you are lost beyond redemption. GOD hath already saved you, so to speak, as far as it depends on him; I mean, as far as it can be done in a moral way, that is, consistently with your freedom of will, and with the nature of
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that holiness and happiness to which he desires to bring you. Provision for your best interest, he hath made in abundance. What remains? Can you still withhold yourself from him? Can you be still an enemy to your own sovereign good? Can you resist any longer the Father of your spirits, after he hath employed such expensive means to reclaim you? Will you continue to spurn his goodness, and reject all his gracious counsels in your favour? Yes, you may do it after all; for he will not obtrude his benefits on you, or any one, against your own deliberate consent. But know, that if you do, it will be to your own destruction. GOD is not mocked; nor will he always speak to you in a soft and supplicating strain. Think not to escape, after despising so great a salvation. Why will you not rather lay aside that fatal enmity, which must for ever shut up the bowels of the tenderest parent from you? Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die? Why will you not suffer the goodness of GOD to lead you to repentance? — To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart. But,

3. *Thirdly*, HOWEVER it may succeed with sinners, shall not the sincere Christian be penetrated with this astonishing love of GOD

towards men, and be excited to love him in return? It is natural for good men, to love supreme excellence for its own sake; but this holy flame cannot but be mightily strengthened in their breasts, by the consideration of those immense benefits attending the gift of his SON, which GOD, of his own free goodness, hath conferred on us. *We love GOD*, says the Apostle, *because He first loved us*^s. And what can be more reasonable? Whom shall we love, if we love not such a Benefactor? *Even the publicans love those that love them*^t. It is the least return we can make: It is what the worst men are capable of; and shall it be found wanting in any who are called good?—*O love the LORD, all ye his Saints*^u! Love him with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and mind: Let no other object rival him in your affections. And if you thus love the LORD, you will hate evil; you will be solicitous to please, and afraid to offend him; you will diligently keep his commandments, loving your neighbours for his sake, and endeavouring to do to them as he has done to you. In fine, you will discharge every office of piety and righteousness; but you will do it with that zeal, fidelity, and chearfulness, which love alone can inspire.

4thly,

^s 1 John iv. 9. ^t Matth. v. 46. ^u Psal. xxxi. 33.

4thly, ONCE more, Christian, from these past manifestations of the love of GOD to us in our sinful perishing state, what motives of encouragement and good hope may we not derive with respect to the future? For, do they not afford a demonstration that GOD is for us? and if GOD be for us, who can be against us?—Now, therefore, may every pious believer say to GOD, as GOD himself said to his servant Abraham after the offering up of Isaac, *Now I know that thou lovest me, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me*^v.—Yes, O my GOD! I know it from this proof, better than from a thousand other arguments; and how can I doubt of it any more? My unworthiness made it difficult for me to credit the recompences which thou hast promised to thy servants. But the death of thy SON confirms my most sublime and joyful hopes. After this, I conclude upon the surest grounds, that every blessing promised in the Gospel is mine, even to the possession of eternal life in Heaven, if I but endeavour to comply faithfully with the designs of thy Grace. How great is thy goodness, O GOD, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee! And how can I decline using my most strenuous endeavours in my own behalf, according to thy will, after re-

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^v Gen. xxii. 12.

ceiving such favours and encouragements from thee ?

SUCH then is the love of GOD which CHRIST's death exhibits to us, and such the improvement we ought to make of it. Our hearts, it may be, are in general but little affected with it, probably because it hath been familiar to us in some sort from our infancy, and we have been accustomed to regard it as our birth-right; or because we do not distinguish these extraordinary manifestations of it from the more faint discoveries of mere nature, having had no experience of what it is to live under the latter; or rather perhaps, because we never think of it, or think of it but very slightly and superficially, there being many other things to which we more willingly give the attention of our minds. All this, however, does not make it a subject less worthy of our frequent and serious thoughts, or less capable of yielding real benefit to our souls. The love of GOD is the first and great commandment in his law: with it, true religion in every person must stand or fall; and whatever we do, it must now be owned that GOD hath not been wanting in the use of proper means to cure the disaffection of our hearts, and to render this commandment easy to us.

II. BUT

II. BUT the cross of CHRIST serves yet farther to inspire us with religious gratitude; because GOD, to his own mercy and compassion, so strongly manifested in this dispensation, hath added the grace or benevolence of our Blessed Redeemer towards us, as another argument of peculiar efficacy to conquer and captivate our hearts. The love of the SON does not lessen or depreciate the love of the FATHER in the work of our redemption, but is really an inhancement and commendation of it, and lays a double engagement on us to embrace the Salvation of the Gospel. Without diminishing aught of the gratitude we owe to the Father Almighty, our hearts cannot avoid being deeply touched with the generous kindness of his Beloved Son : And both these principles lead us to the same worthy temper and conduct ; both of them unite their force to subdue the obstinacy of sinners, to destroy their vices and lusts, and to reduce them entirely, and for ever, to the obedience of the truth. Now, it is in the sufferings of CHRIST that these kindred flames burn with the greatest force and lustre.

HAVING already seen something of the kindness and love of GOD, let us next contemplate a little the love of CHRIST displayed in the same extraordinary events. And
here,

here, for brevity's sake, let us pass by those circumstances already hinted, which commend CHRIST's love to us in common with the FATHER's love, namely, the unworthiness of the objects of it; and the necessity, the reasonableness, the extent and importance of the benefits it seeks to confer on them: Nor let us dwell on the tenderness and condescension, the generous unwearied beneficence which JESUS exercised in all his converse with men. Let us confine our attention merely to the inconveniences and sufferings his love made him willing to undergo for us, which is the surest test of love in any being capable of suffering.

To wish well to others, and do them such kind offices as they stand in need of, and we can perform without incommoding ourselves, are marks of an ordinary charity, frequently given and received among all the human race. It is even common to take a little trouble for the benefit of others. But when a man does good to another at great expence to himself, and willingly encounters formidable dangers, endures grievous toils and hardships, and submits to extreme affliction for the service of his friends, we justly regard this as a proof of the highest generosity and disinterested affection: And in general,
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the ardour and sincerity of men's friendship is measured by the difficulties it surmounts in exerting itself.—Examining the love of JESUS by this rule, what a scene have we before us, and how many motives of admiration and gratitude! Well might the Apostle describe JESUS by the character of *Him that loved us*^x. For, to consider only the simple narrative of his life and ministry recorded by the Evangelists, who ever loved men, or any individuals among them, as JESUS did the whole race? And who is there that has any knowledge of his character, but must know JESUS by this description, and recollect him when he thinks of the Friend of human kind, and the Lover of souls? Undoubtedly the love of JESUS toward men was quite singular and unexampled. It was a thing as new upon the earth, as the dignity of his person and office. From the beginning of the world, nothing was ever seen parallel or comparable to it, nor shall be.

IN order to promote our true and everlasting happiness, what present interest did he not give up? what pains and sorrows of this world did he decline? The lowly condition and poverty of his life, which may be truly regarded as the source of all that he suffered

^x Rev. i. 5.

suffered on earth, was a voluntary sacrifice to the great interests of mankind. In Him, we see the *Heir of all things* choosing to appear in the world as one that *had not where to lay his head*; because he could in these circumstances do more essential service to us. The SON of GOD *came not to be ministered unto*, (as it is usual for the Princes and Great Ones of the earth), *but to minister to others, and to give his life a ransom for many*. And his Divine powers were never in any instance employed, either to procure accommodation to himself, or to ward off calamity; but were always sacredly appropriated to the glory of his Father, and the benefit of men. For this end, he renounced all those private advantages which are counted most dear and valuable among men, wealth, ease, pleasure, applause, popularity, power; nay he willingly parted with liberty, and life itself. In Him was united the fulness of celestial endowments and privileges, with an absolute destitution of all sublunary comfort. *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, says the Apostle, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich*^y; or, *He lived poor for our sakes, that we might be enriched through his poverty*. Not to speak of what he gave up.

^y 2 Cor. viii. 9.

up, by becoming flesh, and to confine ourselves only to his public ministry, we find, that, in the midst of divine riches*, when he had every thing in his power, he chose to sustain all the inconveniences of worldly poverty, and consecrated his riches solely to the profit and emolument of us men, that we might with him, and by his means, attain to true riches, or become rich toward God. Of all the heavenly affluence which surrounded him in this world, he reserved nothing for his own use, with respect to outward quiet, or honour, or freedom, or safety, but devoted it wholly to our good; so that we should not grudge, when required, to part with something for him; nor fail to attempt some imitation of that Grace of his to which we owe so much.

To make us still more sensible of the generous exemplary benevolence of our LORD, the same Apostle says in another place, that *Christ Jesus being in the form of God* (as he certainly was here below, being Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh) *did not hold it for*

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* We do not applaud the rich man who gives away his riches, and reduces himself to a state of poverty; but him, who, keeping his riches, studies only to employ them according to the will of God, and is ready at any time to part with them all, rather than offend him.

*a prey to be as God*². So the words may be literally rendered, and more justly than they are in our translation. The meaning is, he did not arrogantly seize, and retain to himself, those godlike powers and honours which he possessed, or was entitled to: He regarded them not as his prey or booty, as acquisitions of his own, and for his own use, but as the gifts of GOD, to be employed only for his glory. Contrary to the practice of men, who commonly insist to the utmost on the rights and pre-eminences of their rank, and often claim more than is due to them; neither do they acknowledge GOD in the superior advantages which he bestows on them, but use them to draw honour and respect to themselves; JESUS, when in the form of GOD, and appearing like Him among men, considered himself as having nothing without him, and entitled to claim or keep nothing against his will. This was one clear proof of his humility. But this was not all; for, as the Apostle proceeds, *He emptied himself*, to wit, of the form of GOD, laying aside every mark of that majestic dignity and splendour whereby he represented GOD on earth, *and took upon him the form of a servant*, or slave, even with respect to men: That is, because the will of GOD, and the good

² Philip ii. 6,—8. Matth. i. 23. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

good of mankind, called him to it, he meekly submitted, notwithstanding his greatness, to servile offices, and servile treatment. The reverse of the first Adam, who fell by aspiring to be like GOD, this Second Adam, when really possessed of that honour, exchanged the form of GOD for the form of a slave, in order to promote our happiness; *and was made in the likeness of men*, not merely by assuming their nature, but by descending to their common lot^a; becoming like those men who have no extraordinary endowments^b, no pre-eminence of power or dignity above others, even of the lowest class, while in fact he was far superior to the highest. *And* (to sum up all in a few words) *being found in fashion as a man*, (that is, in the appearance, circumstances, or condition of a mean and ordinary mortal, though he was far from being really such), *He humbled himself*; for he was not humbled by others against his own purposes, but voluntarily exhibited an example of humility; *and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

SUCH was the condescension of our Divine SAVIOUR! He had been remarkable for a humble and beneficent charity, during all his former life; but when the time came in
which

^a Psal. lxxxii. 6, 7. ^b Rom. viii. 3.

which it behoved him, according to the appointment of his Father, to suffer and die, he hesitated not to descend from a state of grandeur and elevation, never possessed by any man before or after him, to the deepest abyss of humiliation. The true Image and Representative of GOD in power, as well as in other perfections, He consented to appear the poorest, weakest, and most helpless of the human race, destitute of all power, and of every pre-eminence above a slave, or a man of the meanest rank; and retained no mark of his real greatness, except a more than human patience and charity. Here was a humility sufficient for ever to confound the pride of men; for, what are all the distinctions and pre-eminences they have above one another, compared to those which JESUS had above the greatest of them? This however is the example of that humble, pious, and charitable mind which was in CHRIST, and which we should endeavour to have in us. The glory of superior talents, is to employ them for the honour of the Giver. The more GOD is pleased to advance us, the more ready should we be to stoop, for the benefit of his creatures and children. This may be singular, and contrary to the common ways of the world; but it is true greatness of mind. What can be more noble
and

and magnanimous, than to despise all the honours, conveniences, and comforts which this world can bestow, together with all the pain, contempt, and ignominy it can inflict, in order to please GOD, and promote the real happiness of men?

BUT, to return to our general argument, it is evident from the most cursory view of our SAVIOUR's history, that his life was a life of disinterested and unwearied beneficence toward men. To their best interests, all his time and thoughts were devoted; and in doing good to them, he was so indefatigable as to forget at times the necessary refreshments of nature. What appears most admirable of all, is the constancy of his love; a sacred fire which burnt perpetually in his breast, and which no waters were able to extinguish; no opposition, discouragement, unworthiness, or ingratitude whatever, on the part of those whom he sought, or whom he obliged, had power to cool the ardour of his benevolence. In his labour of love he steadily persevered against every obstacle, and omitted nothing to forward and carry on the gracious designs of Heaven, respecting the salvation of men, though his motions were constantly watched by bitter enemies, who sought occasions against

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him,

him, traduced his actions, and often, upon the failure of other methods of hurting, laid snares for his life. How much had he to bear from the bad returns of those who were indebted to him for the most important benefits, both to their bodies and souls! and how much, from the dulness, prejudices, and worldly-mindedness of his own Disciples!—To conclude this point, in ministering to the good of our degenerate race, the SON of GOD deemed no afflictions, humiliations, or indignities, too great for him to endure: He welcomed every sort of calamity to his own person, from whence benefit could redound to the souls of men; and after passing through the hardships of a poor and despised condition, and a life of toil, and contradiction, and reproach, He refused not to *wash us from our sins in his own blood*^c.

SOME perhaps will say, that the love of JESUS was not perfectly pure and disinterested, because of the great reward which he had in view. But, what reward did he look for on this earth? And if the reward he expected was purely of a spiritual and heavenly kind, does this lessen the generosity of his character, and not rather increase it? Yes, surely, it was noble in him to submit to so many labours and sufferings, with a
view

^c Rev. i. 5.

view of obtaining more power to do good to us. The prospect of becoming mighty to save, by doing the will of GOD, must delight the heart of generosity itself; and this was the reward to which our SAVIOUR aspired. This was, if you will, the selfishness of the LORD JESUS, and a principal ingredient in the joy set before him, for which he endured the shame and pain of the cross. Do not affect a refinement, which neither reason nor revelation will justify. Look to JESUS, and fear not that your piety will become too mercenary.

I HAVE here given a brief account of the love of JESUS towards us, particularly as it was manifested in his death. But it is not fit to leave so useful and pleasing a subject, without enquiring what effects this love ought to have upon our hearts, and endeavouring to improve it into a fixed principle of gratitude and duty toward him. This is a duty founded only in revelation, but flowing naturally from the knowledge of his character and relation to us.—Hath the SON of GOD evidenced his affection by laying down his life for me*, and becoming the willing victim

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of

* When CHRIST is said to have suffered and died for us, it has been made a question, what is the precise import of the word *for*? Does it mean *on account of*? or, *instead of*?

—Now,

of my salvation? Great goodness surely! incomparable generosity! *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*^d. But greater still was the love of JESUS, who laid down his life for his enemies, in order to make them his friends, and the friends of GOD. *He loved the Church, and gave himself for it*^e, while as yet it was no Church to him. For a righteous
or

^d John xv. 13.^e Eph. v. 25.

—Now, it is certain that the former must be meant, in every passage where this matter is spoken of; for all agree, that whatever CHRIST did and suffered, it was on our account, and for our benefit. There are likewise many texts where the word cannot possibly admit of the latter signification; as, when CHRIST is said to have been *delivered for our offences*^a; to have *died for our sins*^b; to be *our Passover, sacrificed for us*^c, &c. So, when he entered into Heaven *for us*^d, as our Forerunner, it was not in our stead, but on our behalf, and for our good. And unless we will say that he rose again from the tomb in our stead, the Apostle Paul seems to forbid us to say that he died for us, in that sense of the word, when he says^e that CHRIST *died for us, and rose again*^e. He rose, as well as died for us; and the word *for* must bear the same sense when applied to his resurrection, as when applied to his death. Not but that he died in our stead, as we must have perished if he had not died: But one uniform signification of a word is always best, unless the sense in other places necessarily requires it to be varied; and it is remarkable, that our translators have never rendered it *instead of*, throughout the whole New Testament, but have very properly confined themselves to the general term *for us*.

^a Rom. iv. 25.^b 1 Cor. xv. 3.^c Chap. v. 7.^d Heb. vi. 20.^e 2 Cor. v. 15.

or a good man, rarely hath one been found willing to die; but who did ever, like JESUS, die for the ungodly? It was undoubtedly a great commendation of his, as well as of his Father's love, *that while we were yet sinners CHRIST died for us.*—And can I remain insensible to such a Benefactor? Is this a friend to be slighted, opposed, and contemned by me? Foolish and detestable baseness! Far be it, or any portion of it, from a believer in JESUS. If I have forgot my SAVIOUR's love in too many instances hitherto, let it henceforth dwell and reign in my heart, and *constrain me to live, not unto myself, but to him that died for me, and rose again^s.*

COME, Christian, behold the works of your Master's love! See what it hath made him willing to do and suffer for you, how helpless and miserable it found you, to what privileges it hath raised you, from how great evils it means yet to deliver you, and how great glory and happiness to confer on you.—Can you piously muse on these things, without feeling your heart burn within you, fired with the love of real goodness, with a holy indignation against sin, and with a determined resolution to follow your SAVIOUR in a life of all piety, beneficence, and purity?

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^s Rom. v. 6,—8.^s 2 Cor. v. 14.

THE first duty, no doubt, which his disciples owe him in return for his love, is gratitude, and joyful praise; saying, as the multitudes did at his public entrance into Jerusalem, in the character of MESSIAH, *Hosanna to the SON of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the LORD! Hosanna in the highest^b!* If such gratulations and praises were due to him in the days of his flesh, surely we ought to raise our strain after his exaltation to the right hand of power; and to say in the language of inspiration, *Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us Kings and Priests unto GOD even his Father, unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever^c! Thou art worthy—for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation^d. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing^e!*—Blessed LORD! how can I deny thee my praises for thy worth, and dignity, and favour with GOD? or my gratitude for thy kindness to me, and thy unparalleled zeal to promote my happiness? How can I forbear to celebrate thy grace and benevolence to the human race; and if possible, to make all the world know (as well as I) how much we are indebted

^b Matth. xxi. 9. ^c Rev. i. 5, 6. ^d Chap. v. 9. ^e Verse 12.

indebted to thee? Sincerely do I rejoice, because thou art gone to the FATHER, and evermore will I exult in thy glorious victory over death. *Salvation unto our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb¹, Amen! Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever^m!*

BUT it is not only the voice of praise, however sincere and fervent, that is expected from us, when we are taught to ascribe immortal glory and dominion unto him that loved us. He is further entitled to receive from us the praise of a holy and obedient life, such as may do honour to his religion, and may demonstrate that He alone, and no other Master, has the dominion over us. How can we otherwise shew our hearty compliance with the design of that love which we admire and celebrate? And is there indeed, Christian, any other Master under whose dominion you would, upon cool reflection, rather wish to be? Is there any that has a better right to every possible testimony of your respect and gratitude? Is there any that has so dearly purchased you? or deserved so well of you? or whose yoke is more light and easy? and who can conduct you

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more

¹ Rev. vii. 10.^m Chap. v. 13.

more effectually to your true happiness?—If there is, then go your ways and attach yourself to that new leader. Walk no more with JESUS. Deny, if you will, the Holy One and the Just. Renounce allegiance to the LORD, who died for you, and who now liveth for evermore, and has the keys of hell and of death.—But if there is not, then let your heart and life, as well as your tongue, confess that JESUS CHRIST is LORD, and adhere inviolably to him who is the true Shepherd and Bishop of your soul.

MEDITATE, O my soul! yet farther on the point, and say, Hath the SON of GOD done so much for me, and can his love persuade me to do nothing for Him? For me he hath laid down his life; and can he not prevail on me to forego one criminal passion, pleasure, or interest, for Him? Hath he washed me from my sins in his blood, and shall I still persist to defile myself with them? Shall I obstinately hug and cherish in my bosom those execrable vices which brought my SAVIOUR to the death of the cross, and which, unrepented of, will infallibly bring me to eternal ruin? What words can express the folly and ingratitude of such conduct! and what a terrible condemnation does it deserve! Blessed JESUS! let thy love constrain me, by

a sweet, but irresistible force, to give up every thing, how dear soever it may otherwise be, which would dispute with thee the possession of my heart, or hinder me to be entirely thine : And let me have the consolation of giving thee always a decided preference in my affection, above all the desirable things of this world.

THUS ought a Christian to think with himself, and such should be the prevailing desire of his soul. And without doubt there is great power and efficacy in CHRIST's love seriously considered, as well as in the love of GOD, to promote the conversion of sinners, who have yet any remains of faith in them, or even of a candid and ingenuous temper. Did they but lay this great subject to heart, they would find it difficult to continue in their sins : For you can never turn your eyes to the amazing sufferings of your SAVIOUR, without reflecting on your sins as the cause of them, since it was for your offences he was delivered, for your sins that he died. As a sinner, it may be truly affirmed, that it was you who took counsel against him, you who betrayed and sold him : It was you who made him sweat blood in the garden ; who tried, and condemned, and mocked, and scourged him, and pierced his hands and his feet

feet on the cross. You are incensed at the immediate authors of these outrages, and perhaps would willingly expose your life to revenge them. But, let me rather intreat you in his name, to turn your indignation homeward upon your own sins, the true original cause of all his sorrows. This is his request, his commandment. And can you really after this, resolve to harbour any one of them? Can you consent to entertain those hateful enemies to your own souls, who did so cruelly murder your dearest friend, and brightest model of perfection? Where then would be your love and gratitude to him, or your respect for his character?

If these thoughts make any impression on you, while you *look on him whom you have piercedⁿ*, the natural effect of them will be, to inflame your hatred of sin, and to controul every vicious propensity in your heart; especially since you cannot persist in any criminal indulgence, without renewing the mournful passion of your SAVIOUR, without *crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame^o*. You thereby render all his benevolent labours and sufferings so far vain, defeat the purposes of his love, and bring reproach on his name and religion in the

ⁿ Zech. xii. 10.

^o Heb. vi. 6.

the world. Whatever esteem, therefore, you may profess to have for him, whatever sympathy you feel in tracing the series of his afflictions, or resentment against his murderers, it is highly probable, that, had you lived in the same age and place with him, you would have been among the execrable band who cried, *Crucify him! Crucify him!*—Or, that were he to appear in your own age and country, in the same form he did then, you would be for treating him again in the same manner.

BE this, however, as it will, it is certain there can be no real love to CHRIST, without obedience to his precepts, seeing he frequently puts the proof of our love upon this very thing: ‘Ye are my friends (says he) if ye do whatsoever I command you: If a man love me, he will keep my words. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And finally, Why call ye me LORD! LORD! and do not the things which I say?’—While we refuse obedience to his orders, which are the dictates of perfect wisdom and love, every other testimony of our respect for him is vain: He rejects and despises it.

BUT,

BUT, how doth love to CHRIST express itself, when it animates the breasts of his sincere disciples? and what fruits will naturally spring from it? The answer to this important question is pretty obvious from what has been already said; nevertheless it may be fit to add the following particulars.—The love of CHRIST will incline those who are possessed of it, to have him frequently in their thoughts, and to contemplate, with reverent attention, his words and works, as described in the Gospel Records. They will take delight to follow him every where, to trace all the steps of his life, and to mark, on every occasion, for their own practical use, what he said and did. To understand and digest his doctrines, and imbibe his spirit, will be the chief object of their care. The means and opportunities of remembering and conversing with him, they will be loth to neglect; and will, with peculiar pleasure, use such as are divinely instituted, and consequently most favourable for these purposes; by a religious observation of the LORD's day, the memorial of his resurrection from the dead, and the birth-day of his kingdom; by a regular and devout attendance on the duties of secret, family, and public worship, and of hearing the word, in all which JESUS hath promised to be with his sincere followers; and

and particularly, by commemorating him in the holy ordinance of the Supper. They will moreover be zealous, by their influence and good example, to promote his cause and interest in the world; and to support, at all times, and in all conversations, the honour of his Name. In offices of kindness to their brethren, and his, they will be especially careful to abound, for his sake; and will not fail to afford the meanest of them all possible relief and succour in their afflictions, since he is pleased to consider such works as kindnesses done to himself. Nay, their love to him will make them ready and determined, for him, to part with their dearest interests in this world, and even life itself, if required; without which they know they would not be worthy of him. Finally, under the influence of this noble principle, they will continually aspire after a nearer resemblance of him in their temper and behaviour; and ardently long for that blessed state which he hath promised them, where they shall be like him in his glory, shall see him as he is, and be ever with him.

SUCH was the love which the Apostles and Primitive Christians testified for our LORD. Under how many labours, conflicts, and

and sufferings, did this holy attachment support and cheer their minds ! For Him, they willingly suffered the loss of all things, and counted them but dung compared with his friendship. Friends, family, kindred, fortune, credit and reputation, all hope of advancement, and even of peace and safety in this world, were sacrificed at once, and without hesitation, to this darling object. They rejoiced, and held themselves honoured, when called to suffer shame for his Name. Incessant and indefatigable in their endeavours to promote the success of his religion, and the salvation of men, they were never discouraged by the toils and hardships, or the dangers and persecutions, which they daily experienced in that great work, and on account of it. Equally above the smiles and frowns of the world, they deemed nothing worth their regard, compared with what they owed to the LORD JESUS, and the faithful execution of his orders ; neither counted they their lives dear to them, that so they might finish their course with joy.

THUS they lived by the faith of the SON of GOD, who loved them, and gave Himself for them. And if we had any suitable sense of his love, which equally extends to us, we should doubtless be animated with some portion

tion of the same generous spirit. Exempted from the awful trials which fell to their lot, we should study at least to prove the sincerity of our love, by more diligence in performing the easier duties that are required of us. Far from being remiss and backward, as we too often are, we should advance and run in the way of his commandments. His yoke would never be born heavily and reluctantly by us, but with a holy alacrity and joy. Every-thing whereby we could testify our esteem of him and his words, would be agreeable; and the most difficult and painful instances of duty would seem light to us, for the love we had to him.

AND thus far concerning the love which CHRIST hath shewn us in his death.— If I have dwelt long on this topic, the importance, the copiousness, and the sweet and powerful efficacy of it, for promoting Christian piety, will be my apology with all the friends of JESUS. The sacred principles of love to GOD, even our Father, and to JESUS CHRIST his Son, are calculated to have the most extensive and salutary influence on our lives; and there is nothing can conduce more to cherish and strengthen them in our hearts, than the pious contemplation of our SAVIOUR's death and passion.— But we have
not

not yet done with this subject of Christian Love:—For,

III. *Thirdly*, We must not omit to observe, what the Gospel so often teaches, that the blood of CHRIST was intended to cement the union, peace and love, which ought to reign among all men, but especially all that call themselves his followers.

THE Apostle John, having mentioned the ever-wonderful love of GOD in sending his only Son to be the propitiation for our sins, infers with the utmost reason,—*Beloved, if GOD SO loved us, we ought also to love one another*^p. As joint sharers in the love of our common Father, should not our gratitude to Him, which is otherwise of no value, and can add nothing to his happiness, produce a cordial brotherly affection toward one another? Should it not exercise and prove itself in works of beneficence to his children, whom he hath appointed to receive the fruits of it in his name? He is willing that our love to Him should all turn to the good of one another; nay, he peremptorily requires it, and it is what he mainly aimed at in the manifestation of Gospel Grace: For, as another Apostle teaches us, *The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned*^q.

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^p 1 John iv. 11. ^q 1 Tim. i. 5.

THE love of GOD, in every view we can take of it, presses this obligation on us with mighty force. Doth gratitude make us seek to please God? What sacrifice can we offer to him, that will be more acceptable, than the exercise of charity to our brethren? Doth it render us prompt to obey him? What instance of obedience is more important than this? Doth it lead us to imitate and resemble him? What practice is more godlike? — And on the other hand, asks the Apostle, How can we pretend to know GOD^v, or to love him^w, and have communion with him^x, while our hearts are void of charity and brotherly love?— Strange, that any should hope to recommend themselves to his favour by injustice and cruelty, or even while they have nothing but neglect and indifference toward those who are the objects of his friendly care! Surely they little know him. If the spirit of malice and selfishness should insinuate, that such and such persons are unworthy of our love, let us ask, Are they more unworthy of it than we were, not to say are still, of GOD's love? If pride should suggest, that we are great ones, and that these creatures are too little for our regard, let us for a moment turn our eyes to the greatness of GOD, and

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^r Heb. xiii. 16.^s 1 John iii. 11.^t Chap. iv. 7.^u Matth. v. 44, 45.^v 1 John iv. 8.^w Ver. 20.^x Ch. iii. 17.

his condescension toward us. If an unbounded self-love should dispose us to insist rigorously upon all the rights we can lay claim to against any of our neighbours, let us put the question to our own hearts, Where would we have been at this day, if GOD had availed himself of the like argument against us?—Finally, if resentment should magnify the affronts or injuries we have received, and should attempt to justify an eternal distance and implacable aversion to the authors of them, let us calmly challenge ourselves, to answer, what sense we have of GOD's love in such a temper, and what resemblance we bear to our Heavenly Father. Thus should we contemplate the love of GOD, so richly manifested toward us in our redemption by the blood of his SON; and would we but give a serious practical attention to it in this view, we should need no other exhortation to perform all the amiable offices of charity as occasion required, and to avoid every-thing contrary to them. We should be in the happy state of those Christians, to whom St Paul said, *But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of GOD to love one another*^x.

BUT

^w Matth. xviii. 23, &c.

^x 1 Theff. iv. 9.

BUT the same essential obligation is still farther enforced upon us by the love of the LORD JESUS ;—a motive often urged in the sacred oracles, and to which no sincere Christian can remain insensible. In fact, there is no point of morals or religion, which the SAVIOUR of the world hath laboured more to establish among men, than that of mutual love ; and yet perhaps there is no instance in which his endeavours have been less successful. One would think, that this was the chief design of his mission ; and more, it is certain, he could not have done to promote it, had he aimed at nothing else. His birth was proclaimed by the Heavenly Host, with—*Glory to GOD in the highest ! on earth peace, good will towards men !* Throughout the whole course of his public life, and more especially at his death, he appeared as the minister of peace and reconciliation, not only of men to GOD, but of one man to another. By him was broken down the middle wall of partition, which had so long separated the Jews from the Gentiles ; and the odious distinction abolished, between Greek and Barbarian, Roman and Scythian, bond and free. It was his gracious design, if possible, to put an end to all quarrels and enmities among men, to make but one people of

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all

all the nations of the earth, and to give all his followers but one heart and soul; as those early Christians actually had², who felt most powerfully the influence of his example and doctrine. Many are the ties by which we stand connected with him; but we have nothing to connect us with Him, which tends not at the same time to endear us to one another; and when we violate brotherly love, we dissolve our union with Him, as well as with our brethren. In former times, a common nature, common afflictions, and mortality, were almost the only bonds of union among men; and these for the most part little regarded, amidst their contentions for the riches and power of the world. But now, under CHRIST, we have, superadded to these, one spirit, one faith, one hope, one Shepherd and LORD, one GOD and FATHER of all: we have the same baptism, the same laws, and the same promises; and we are one body. Might it not be expected, that so many heavenly bonds of love should have some power to prevent or heal our divisions and variances? especially when we profess to be the followers of a SAVIOUR, who hath *so* loved us, as to lay down his life for us all; who hath delivered it to us as a *new* commandment³, and *his* commandment by way of

² Acts iv. 32. ³ John xiii. 34, &c.

of eminence^b, that we should love one another as he hath loved us; who hath made this love the peculiar and distinctive badge of his disciples in the world; and lastly, hath appointed a solemn ordinance in his church to be statedly celebrated by his followers, in token of their union with Him their common Head, and with one another as the members of his body? According to Him, every thing but sin ought to unite them: but according to their practice, alas! any thing is sufficient to divide them; their common religion most of all. The doctrine of peace and love hath been seen to kindle in their minds, the most violent animosities; and the faith which should have wrought by love, hath operated by an implacable and mortal enmity, often seeking the ruin of those lives which CHRIST came to save. They have been ambitious to distinguish themselves by any mark, rather than that which the Great Shepherd hath prescribed for his flock. Reversing the rule of the Apostle, they have acted as if faith were greater than charity, and not charity greater than faith^c. The least supposed failure in point of faith, hath warranted them, in their own conceits, to break the bond of charity; and the total destruction of this capital virtue, hath been held very consistent

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with

with a pure and sound faith. Hence they have often renounced communion with one another, and hated one another, on account of questions which they scarce pretended to understand. For the sake of speculative truth, which often escapes the most sagacious, and conduces little to real piety at best; they have sacrificed Christian Love, which was certainly within their reach, and would not have failed to make them virtuous and happy. Hence the disputings, the schisms, the anathemas, the persecutions, the wars, and massacres for Religion, which have so sadly deformed and laid waste the Christian Church. We ought, no doubt, to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. But then, after being first well resolved what that faith is, charity should still preside in all our contentions. For the sake of faith, and hope itself, we should preserve charity; because when it hath left us, our faith is vain, and our hope a delusion. On the other hand, nothing will more effectually recommend our faith to others, than the sweet and heavenly influence of charity accompanying it.—But I am enlarging too far, having intended only to shew that the love of CHRIST, wherever it truly dwells, will seek, in his way, the good of mankind, for whom he died; will appease,
instead

instead of exciting, dissensions and animosities among his friends; and endeavour, by solid arguments and good examples, by meekness and beneficence to gain his adversaries. Time would fail me to rehearse all the apostolical exhortations which are delivered to this purpose. Let one suffice: *Walk in love*, says St Paul, *as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour*^d.

Now, the sum of what has been said in this long section, I cannot better express than in the words of an eminent modern writer*, formerly referred to, which are these, or nearly so.—‘ As the Christian Religion, says he, ‘ is founded on the love of GOD, and carried ‘ on by the love of CHRIST, so it is completed by the love of Men to GOD, and to ‘ CHRIST, and to one another. The great ‘ end of this religion is to make all of us *one* ‘ with GOD and CHRIST ‘, that we may act ‘ upon the same principles of benevolence ‘ and love, and thereby pursue, in a consistent ‘ manner, as they do, the perfection and ‘ happiness of the universe: For, the sum of ‘ all perfection in rational beings, consists in ‘ unity of will and design with GOD, who is

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^d Eph. v. 2. ^e John xvii. 21.

* Benjamin Ben Mordecai.

‘ infinitely wise, and just, and good’—Thus he: And what objections have ye philosophers to this? You, I mean, whose philosophy consists chiefly in contradicting and disparaging the Gospel, what will ye oppose to this? Ye lovers of mankind, and of your country, (for ye do not pretend to love God) will ye furnish us with better motives to virtue and goodness from your own stores? Will ye deny that this is the Christian Religion? or that a religion so constructed, and of such a tendency, bears upon it evident marks of its heavenly origin, and could never be the production of human artifice, and human passions?

SECT. III.

SECTION III.

CHRIST'S Death an Argument to Repentance.

THE practical uses of our SAVIOUR'S death and passion, for confirming our faith, and conciliating our love, have been above plained as we were enabled. We should next shew the efficacy thereof, as an argument to persuade sinners to repent and turn to GOD. And to that effect so much has been occasionally said already, in places where it could not well be omitted, particularly in the last section, that it may seem unnecessary to insist farther on it here. It is true, the love of GOD, and the love of our neighbour, are the two great commandments, to which all the rest refer, and on which hang all the Law and the Prophets. Love is the fulfilling of the Law; so, that if this one point could be secured, nothing more would be wanted. Yet as there are certain views of sin better adapted than others to make sinners forsake it, and to preserve the righteous from committing it; and as these views are nowhere more strikingly exhibited than in the sufferings of CHRIST, our subject requires us to treat of this motive more directly by itself, as we shall afterwards do some other motives

motives to piety and virtue, drawn from the same source, though at bottom they may be all included in the preceding argument of Love.

OUR SAVIOUR's passion, when contemplated with the eye of Faith, and with any suitable measure of pious attention, affords a powerful call to repentance; because it shews us, in a convincing manner, the vileness and malignity of sin, together with the certainty of pardon upon repentance; of final destruction awaiting us, if we do not repent; and lastly, of our being enabled, if willing, to perform true and acceptable repentance.

I. No sinner will think of amending his ways, until he is convinced that they are bad and dangerous. A conviction of the evil of sin, is necessary in the first place to his repentance; and this conviction is very likely to be wrought in him, by a serious consideration of our SAVIOUR's death. Indeed, if we loved GOD, it would be impossible for us not to hate sin: our hatred of moral evil, must always be in proportion to our love of supreme excellence; and whatever tends to kindle this sacred flame in our breasts, serves also at the same time to increase our abhorrence of all iniquity. But one may
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be touched with the odiousness of sin, who is not much affected with the love of God; and the first step to virtue, is to hate and shun vice. *Cease to do evil; learn to do well*^a.

THE evil of sin appears in its nature, and in its consequences; as it is the transgression of God's holy law, implying rebellion and enmity against the most necessary, benign, and rightful authority; and as, by the constitution of eternal wisdom, it has death for its wages. Nor can any thing be more fit, than that those who obstinately persist, against all their obligations, to subvert the order, and destroy the happiness of God's creation, should themselves be exterminated from it, with signal marks of the Divine displeasure. Goodness itself requires, that what cannot be amended, should be destroyed; and a great evil it must be, that deserves such a recompence from the hands of perfect goodness and righteousness. Accordingly it was sin that brought death into the world, together with all the miseries that mortal man is heir to;—in respect of nations, the scourges of war, famine, pestilence, discord, infatuation, and weakness, going on to dissolution;—in respect of individuals, the loss of their substance, their health,

^a Isa. i. 16.

health, their credit, the shortening of their days, the ruin of their inward peace and quiet of mind, the tumult of the passions, the stings and lashes of conscience, the awful forebodings of future vengeance; or, what is worse than all, the hideous darkness of a hard heart, &c. These are some of the deplorable effects of sin, which we see daily in others, or feel in ourselves, as all mankind have done from the beginning of the world; and yet we do not sufficiently know the evil of it. It was necessary that the sufferings of CHRIST should be added, to expose the malignity of this terrible devouring monster in its true colours: To which end they are highly conducive, as we cannot but acknowledge at first sight, that sin was both the immediate and the remote cause of them.

THAT sin was the direct and immediate cause of our SAVIOUR's sufferings, no one can doubt, who knows any thing of his history. From what other source arose all the ill usage that he met with in the world? And what was his whole public life, but one continued series of contradiction, rebuke, and blasphemy, occasioned by the pride, envy, and hypocrisy of wicked men? It was to be expected, that, among a people possessed of but a moderate share of piety
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and justice, a person of JESUS's character should have experienced no evils which it was in their power to prevent; or, that if mistakes and prejudices had arisen in the beginning, they would have been soon laid aside upon better information; that every thing would have been readily done on their part, to make his life happy, and his work successful; and in short, that he would have been esteemed, admired, and worshipped by all, as he actually was by some. For, when had the world ever seen in human flesh, such consummate knowledge in divine things, such supernatural gifts and powers, and withal such piety, purity, and beneficence of life? Who could be an enemy to one of this character? Who could forbear to respect and venerate him? None surely but those in whom false religion, together with the force of vicious passions, and interfering interests, had entirely erased the principles of rectitude and candour implanted in their nature. The lustre of his worth, therefore, serves to give the malice of his enemies a darker hue.—But this point has been sufficiently explained already, in the historical part of our Essay; where we have seen, that, in the death of JESUS CHRIST, iniquity filled up its measure, and malice collected all its force, for the oppression of
truth

truth and innocence; where the unjust resentment of enemies, the desperate perfidy of a friend, the calumny of false witnesses, the superstition, hypocrisy, and cruelty of pretended saints; the undue influence of these hypocrites over a misguided populace; the profligacy of a libertine Prince, who regarded nothing but his pleasures; and finally, the criminal policy of an unworthy Governour, who, with his eyes open, sacrificed justice to worldly interest; all concurred to bring about the crucifixion of the SON OF GOD. I only add here, that in this instance, sin appears exceeding sinful; and thus far it was permitted to go, that we might have a true specimen of what it is at all times disposed to do to GOD, and his friends, and his kingdom, if it had but power.

BUT the death of JESUS CHRIST serves to shew the evil of sin, and to excite our hatred of it, as it was also the remote and original cause of the same awful event. This is one of the fundamental and self-evident principles of the Gospel. It needs no proof. Every Christian is already persuaded of it. Had there been no sin, there would have been no need of a SAVIOUR, no Saviour at least to suffer and die. It was not only by means of sin that CHRIST suffered, but on account of the sins of men,
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He being without sin himself. For, there may be suffering where there is no guilt, and consequently no punishment intended; neither is it mere suffering, but the cause thereof, that distinguishes the martyr from the malefactor. *Surely, said the Prophet, He hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows: He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed^b.* It was with a view to take away our sins, or spiritual maladies, and destroy them, which would otherwise have destroyed us, that JESUS died on the cross. *He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him^c.* In Him, spotless innocence was given up to be treated like sin itself, that we who had sinned, might become, by his means, truly righteous and acceptable to GOD, and so receive the treatment of righteous persons. It was thought better that the Holy One of GOD should suffer as the worst of criminals use to do on the earth, than that so great an evil as sin should remain and reign in men, or that it should be pardoned without repentance. *Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God^d.* This he did freely and voluntarily, from

^b Isa. liii. 4, 5.^c 1 Cor. v. 21.^d 1 Pet. iii. 18.

from a generous resolution to fulfil the merciful designs of his FATHER in our behalf. And can we seriously think of it, without being persuaded that sin has something in it exceedingly odious to GOD, and destructive to men; when such a remedy was, in the councils of infinite wisdom, judged necessary to be employed against it? Can we deem sin a light matter, while we contemplate the SON of GOD nailed to a cross by it, and on its account, and endeavouring, by the effusion of his blood, to save us from its power?

THE evil of sin appears great, when a sinner, in his own person, suffers the just punishment of his evil deeds; but it appears still greater, when an innocent and righteous person suffers cruelly by means of it, and on its account*. This shews that it will spare nothing, and leave nothing unhurt, but aims at universal misery and ruin. GOD ordained his dear SON to oppose himself to the iniquities of men, and to stop the progress of sin among them, at the hazard and expence of his life; and the SON willingly exposed and lost his life in that divine enterprize. Sin itself he did not attempt

* See Dr Whichcot's Sermons, particularly on Reconciliation.

tempt to vindicate; it does not admit of vindication: No just or valid reason can be alledged, why a reasonable creature should not live constantly in the love and fear and obedience of GOD. Our Blessed SAVIOUR, when he undertook our cause, gave up our sinful condition as utterly indefensible; but he died on a cross to bring us out of it, and to render us the proper objects of Divine mercy. And if he suffered so much by occasion of sin, in order to bring sinners to repentance; what must sinners themselves suffer at last, if they are not brought to repentance by him?

HERE, then, sin is exhibited to us in its most odious malignity. By the death of a Sufferer, on its account, who was so innocent and dear to GOD, all that man had done, or should ever do wickedly, is testified against, and condemned on the part of Heaven, in the strongest manner that could be done, without inflicting due punishment on the actual offenders. This remedy shews, that GOD hates sin more, if possible, than he loves his only SON, or than he pities his fallen and perishing offspring. And every one who pretends to be a friend of GOD, or of CHRIST, must hate sin too, with such a hatred as may make him for ever renounce

the practice of it, and be zealous to destroy it utterly in his heart; this being the express purpose and design of CHRIST's sufferings, *who gave Himself for us, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God, even our Father*^c; or in other words, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*^f. If sin be not mortified, and actually put to death, both in our bodies and souls, the death of CHRIST will be entirely frustrated with regard to us.

BUT, by our very baptism, we come under an indispensable obligation to be conformed to CHRIST's death and resurrection, by dying to sin, and walking in newness of life. Whence, against the daring perverters of Gospel Grace, St Paul thus reasons and expostulates^g: *How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* When he says that we are dead to sin, he means what we are, according to our principles, professions, and obligations; what we are, if we have any thing of the spirit and truth of Christianity in us. But how does it appear that we Christians are, in that sense, dead to sin? Can you be ignorant of it? answers the Apostle: *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized*

^c Gal. i. 4.^f Tit. ii. 14.^g Rom. vi. 2,—6.

baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? that is, not only into a belief of his death, and burial, and resurrection; but into a resemblance of these great facts, significantly expressed by the rite of baptism, and an obligation to be conformed to them in our life. Therefore, continues he, we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also (that is, we ought to be) in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man (including the whole mass of vices we were subject to in our unconverted state) is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

IN us, therefore, every kind and degree of wilful sin is crucified and ignominiously put to death with CHRIST, if we have a just regard to our principles and obligations, and a desire to follow out, but as far as concerns ourselves, the salutary design of our SAVIOUR'S death. And in fact, *they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts^b*. If any do otherwise, they

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are

^b Gal. v. 24.

are *enemies of his cross*¹, and live in contradiction to the redemption that is in him.— Thus we see, that the cross of CHRIST, and the view of what he suffered for sin, the sole cause of all his sufferings, is very proper to inspire us with a hearty detestation of all wickedness, to humble us on account of past transgressions, and make us sorrow for them after a godly sort ; and finally, to call forth our most strenuous endeavours, in order to accomplish, agreeably to CHRIST's design, the destruction of sin in ourselves. But,

II. THE next thing necessary to the conversion of a sinner, and which is likewise clearly demonstrated by the death of CHRIST, is the certainty of pardon to the sincere penitent. Without this, the sinner would no doubt go on in his own ways, and give himself up to despair ; whereas the sure prospect of bettering his condition by repentance, is a powerful motive to bring him back to his duty. It cannot be needful to enlarge on this point here, after what has been already said, especially in the former Chapter. Let us only recollect and apply the sum of the argument.—Are you alarmed with the danger of your condition, but discouraged from making any attempt to get out of it, by the fear that re-
pentance

¹ Philip. iii. 18.

penitance will not avail you, on account of the number and greatness of your past offences? Consider, that the very end of CHRIST's mission was to *call sinners to repentance*^k; to *save that which was lost*^l; to save even the chief of sinners^m, by turning them away from their iniquitiesⁿ. Think what he said to them that were weary and heavy laden^o, being burdened with the weight of their sins; how he spake of joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth^p; how far he was from rejecting any that came to him with pious dispositions^q; and what grief he felt for the obstinacy of the impenitent^r. Observe the many Divine attestations with which his doctrine is confirmed; the grand seal of it in his death and resurrection; and the power he is invested with, to accomplish all things agreeably to it. Look up to the Father of mercies, whose name is manifested to you by his SON: Contemplate his essential goodness; and mark what he hath done in the Gospel dispensation, to assure sinful men of his pliability to them that repent. Can you, after all this, have any doubt of his receiving you, upon your ingenuous and speedy return to

F f 3

him?

^k Matth. ix. 13.^l Chap. xviii. 11.^m 1 Tim. i. 15.ⁿ Acts iii. 26.^o Matth. xi. 28,—30.^p Luke xv. 7.^q John vi. 37.^r Luke xix. 41.

him? Can you harbour any suspicion of his willingness to pardon a poor, weak, erring creature, now become sensible of its faults, and humbly imploring mercy at the throne of his Grace?

WHAT further proof would you have? Is there not enough here to calm the most jealous and apprehensive mind, if it be but willing to come to God? No assuredly, *In Him you are not straitened, if ye be not straitened in your own bowels*^f, either by some secret disaffection, or some unworthy opinion of him. What the Prophet Isaiah said, we may now say to you, upon still more clear and ample grounds than were known to him: *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*^g. For, in the words of the Apostle speaking of CHRIST, *Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified, from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses*^h.—Or if facts, and the experiences of others be more satisfying to you, hath not CHRIST actually extended the benefit of pardon to condemned malefactors, upon their repentance? to profligate idol-
aters,

^f 2 Cor. vi. 12.^g Isa. i. 18.^h Acts xiii. 38.

aters, to his own murderers, and the persecutors of his friends? And hath he not in them shewn forth sufficiently the patience and grace of Heaven, for the encouragement of those who should afterwards believe on him to everlasting life^w?—Cease not then to hope in GOD, while your hope draws you to him. Only, let it not draw you farther away from him, by nourishing a delusive security in putting off your repentance. Make haste, and delay not, to keep his commandments, lest you afterwards call upon him^x when he will not answer, and seek to enter in when you shall not be able^y. Consider, on the other hand,

III. WHAT a sure and terrible punishment awaits you, if you still go on in your sins. To be convinced of this also, you need only look to the cross of CHRIST. Hath he suffered so much for us, to procure us the liberty of indulging, with impunity, our criminal and brutal passions? Is He the minister of sin? and did he come to establish and enlarge its empire, or to take it away and destroy it for ever?—Undoubtedly to destroy it, one way or other; either by the repentance, or the final perdition, of those who have committed it. After the rich and free offer of

F f 4

Grace

^w 1 Tim. i. 16.^x Prov. i. 28.^y Luke xiii. 24.

Grace which GOD hath made to men in his SON, if it prove ineffectual to reclaim them, what can be expected but judgement and wrath? wrath dreadfully inflamed by the abuse of mercy? According to what GOD said to his ancient people, *You only have I known, of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities*^a. For, the goodness of GOD is to be feared^a still more, if possible, than his power and wrath; seeing it is from the neglect and abuse of the former, that the latter derive all their terrors. And we Christians, of all men, have most cause to be apprehensive on this score. If that Divine goodness which hath been so liberally manifested to us, do not lead us to repentance^b, the necessary consequence is, that we shall treasure up for ourselves wrath against the day of wrath.

MOREOVER, we know that the condemnation of impenitent sinners is established in the same covenant, and ratified with the same blood, which assures the remission of sins to them that repent, that the SON of GOD is prepared with full power and authority, to execute both these sentences, and that the one is as fit and reasonable in itself as the other. With regard to the Israelites
of

^a Amos iii. 2.^a Hol. iii. 5.^b Rom. ii. 4, 5.

of old, who were disobedient, GOD swore that they should not enter into his rest. Is he less determined that his christian people shall not enjoy the happiness of Heaven, without an obedient life, the proper fruit of their faith? And that we may not found any hope on the merits or atonement of a SAVIOUR, exclusive of our own personal obedience, the Apostle warns us, in the most explicit terms, *That, if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin*^c. By apostatizing from the faith, or sinning under the profession of it, we render the sacrifice of CHRIST unprofitable to us; this last and most perfect sacrifice specially provided by the mercy of GOD: And no other is left in the councils of Heaven towards us; nothing is to be looked for after this, but tremendous wrath, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries of GOD and his SON. And how can it be otherwise? Let your own conscience answer the Divine oracle, and say how sore a punishment is due to him who hath trodden under foot the SON of GOD, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?

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^c Heb. x. 26. &c.

IN short, we may deceive ourselves in this matter, if we can:—but it will not be easy for us; it will require no common assistance of the Spirit of Darknes. After all that the love of GOD hath done for us, and all that hath been accomplished in our favour by the love of CHRIST; notwithstanding the mighty proofs we have received both from the FATHER and the SON, of their pity and care for us, and desire of our salvation; they both consent to give us up, yea resolve immutably that we shall perish, and be doomed to everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels, rather than that we shall be saved without true repentance, and a holy life. Would you attempt to turn the artillery of Heaven against Heaven itself, and presume to take encouragement in your sins, from that divine tenderness, forbearance, and liberality, which ought, above all things, to melt your heart, and subdue you to the obedience of the truth? If any thing that miserable deluded mortals can do, is capable to pull down the accumulated vengeance of GOD upon their heads, and to shut them for ever out of the reach of his mercy, it is this.—One thing only remains to complete this argument.

IV. 'SUPPOSING me to be truly sensible
 ' of the necessity of repentance, and seri-
 ' ously disposed to perform the duties of it,
 ' how shall I be enabled to do them? For
 ' the work is great and arduous, and my
 ' strength is nothing.'—If this be indeed
 your only remaining obstacle, it will not
 long detain you in the servitude of sin; for,
 the ability you want, arises, so to speak, out
 of the weakness of CHRIST, and is one of
 the blessed fruits of his crucifixion. So the
 Apostle Paul represents it, when he says,
*What the law could not do, in that it was weak
 through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the
 likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin
 in the flesh*^d. That is, according to some, he
 left no excuse for the practice of sin in any
 of CHRIST's followers, by shewing how it
 may be avoided, or conquered, amidst all
 the real infirmities of human nature. How-
 ever, we may certainly infer from the Apo-
 stle's words, that GOD, by the sufferings of
 his SON on account of sin, hath given a
 mortal blow to its reigning power in all who
 are willing to be free from it: For he adds,
 as the consequence and end of this Divine
 procedure,—*That the righteousness of the Law
 might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the
 flesh, but after the Spirit*^e. See here what GOD
 expects

^d Rom. viii. 3.^e Verse 4.

expects from us, after tending his SON in the condition forefaid; and he expects nothing from us, which he has not given us ability to perform. By nature, we are weak, and without strength; but, through grace, *we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, for which God hath prepared and amply furnished us, that we should walk in them*^e. The Gospel affords a remedy for the weakness of nature, and leaves us no pretence for declining necessary duty on that ground; it hath brought us larger succours from above, than ever were vouchsafed under any former dispensation. The poor enslaved sinner, left in his own hands, may ask in despair, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death*^e? But, assisted by the Gospel, he is enabled to answer in triumph, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*. A plentiful effusion of miraculous gifts and powers, suited to the necessities of the church in its infancy, was the first visible effect of CHRIST's ascension to the FATHER; and the gift of the Spirit, upon our asking it to help our infirmities, is one of the perpetual fruits of his shed blood. Since we have in him a great High-Priest^h that is passed into the Heavens, One so able, and so well disposed to succour us, Can we doubt

^e Eph. ii. 10. ^e Rom. vii. 24, 25. ^h Heb. iv. 14, 16,

doubt of obtaining mercy in answer to our humble supplication, and of finding grace to help in time of need? What says CHRIST of himself to one who sincerely desires to do his duty, but is depressed with a sense of natural infirmity? *My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness*¹. And what says he of his Father, and our Father? *How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*²? How much more than the best Father on earth gives good things to his children?

Now, for any one, after all this, to pretend inability to do what must be done in order to salvation, is either a mere cloke of maliciousness, or a criminal distrust of the power and grace of GOD. This last was the sin of the ancient Israelites, for which they suffered so severely in the wilderness. Terrified at the report of the spies, who told them that the cities of Canaan were strongly fortified¹, and walled up to Heaven, and that its inhabitants were mighty men, of a gigantic stature, compared with whom they and their brethren were but grasshoppers; disheartened, I say, at the view of these natural difficulties, which their own fears exaggerated, and despairing of success, because it seemed improbable

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9.² Luke xi. 13.¹ Num. xiii. 26,—33.

bable by mere human means, the unhappy Israelites refused, at the command of God, to go up and take possession of the good land that he had promised them, though they saw the arm of Omnipotence so manifestly stretched out to support them. For which cause, they were doomed to wander and die in the wilderness, and never reached the Land of Promise.

BEWARE, then, of adding unbelief to other sins. Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. Say boldly, The LORD is my Helper; I will fear no enemy. GOD is on my side; who can with any effect be against me? His power is able to raise me up, if I be willing, even from the deplorable weakness to which my own sin and folly, still more than a degenerate nature, hath reduced me, and to tread Satan under my feet. Does he now require me, not only to abstain from all unjust and fraudulent practices, but to restore what I have gotten by these means? Or, to retract the calumny which I have uttered against my neighbour's reputation, and give the lie to myself? Or, to part with a darling pleasure, which is inconsistent with my salvation? Or, to extirpate a criminal habit, which hath long been fostered in my soul?—These, I feel, alas! are difficult enterprises;

prises ; but, for the difficulty of them, I may thank myself ; and being, one or more of them, indispensably necessary for me, they are not impracticable, while GOD ALMIGHTY is ready to second my honest, though poor endeavours. To labour, to strive, to fight, and to make many painful efforts, is no more than what the best Christians are called to in working out their salvation. And shall I study nothing but ease and pleasure still, after having lost so much time, and done so little of what I ought to have done ? Shall I grudge any exertions which are in my power, for such a cause, when I know they will not be in vain ?—Nor let me plead inability as an excuse for my remissness ; for, in so doing my own mouth would condemn me. If my temporal interest depended on it, I should soon find strength enough to perform the hardest of those duties which my condition calls for ; and have I power to do none of them, with the assistance of GOD, when my eternal salvation is at stake ? I am ashamed to pretend it ; and from this moment I resolve to work diligently with GOD, who worketh in me both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

THUS will a sinner reason upon this point, who, not destitute of understanding and candour,

dour, is deeply humbled under a sense of his sins, and seriously disposed to forsake them. And for his farther encouragement in returning to GOD, it will behove him to consider this plain fact, confirmed by the word of GOD, and by the experience of all ages; That while temporal prosperity is in a great measure an accidental thing, time and chance happening to all men, and while the most zealous and skilful contenders for the advantages of this world have not seldom the mortification to see their deepest projects overthrown, and terminated in sad disappointment, the work which he undertakes, of reforming his life, cannot possibly miscarry, but through his own fault, his own disinclination. If there be here but a willing mind, success is infallible: The intercession of CHRIST, the power and faithfulness of GOD, are pledged for it; and under this security, he may bid defiance to all the Powers of Darkness.

SECT. IV.

SECTION IV.

CHRIST'S Death an Incitement to Proficiency in Virtue.

THE efficacy of CHRIST'S death to persuade a sinner to forsake his sins, and turn to GOD, we have just now endeavoured to shew. We are next to enquire what force the same event, rightly considered, has to excite us to the performance of good works, whereby, under the blessing of Heaven, our moral perfection may be carried on and completed.—As the passion of our SAVIOUR loudly warns us to cease to do evil; so, from it also we learn to do well, and to advance in well-doing. For, if benefits conferred awaken the gratitude of ingenuous minds, and prompt them to make suitable returns to their Benefactor; if we can be touched with the obligations of duty and fidelity to a Master who hath so dearly purchased us and our services; if a proper sense of the dignity of our nature, and the worth of our souls, has any tendency to elevate us above low and grovelling pursuits; finally, if a complete pattern of goodness, tried to the utmost, is fitted to instruct, allure, and animate us in our endeavours after real excel-

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lence ; all these motives of improvement in virtue, arise from the death and sufferings of our REDEEMER, with much more advantage, I humbly conceive, than from any other facts or speculations which have been yet presented to the mind of man.

I. *First*, THE benefits we have received through a crucified SAVIOUR, ought to make us perfect, by exciting our gratitude, and engaging us to make the best returns we can to our Benefactor. In consequence of CHRIST's death and resurrection, we are furnished with three sorts of spiritual benefits, which it behoves us thankfully to improve, and which are calculated to have the noblest influence on our souls,—instructions, promises, and privileges. Consider each of them a little.

1st. THE Gospel affords us that knowledge which we could never have attained without it, and which it most of all concerns us to be possessed of, the knowledge of God, and of ourselves:—respecting God, his character, and providence, and commandments, and designs toward men, are declared to us ;—and in regard to ourselves, we learn from it, our own real condition, end, duty, happiness, and the way to gain it.

Of

Of these interesting subjects, the bulk of mankind, notwithstanding all the aids of philosophy, were grossly ignorant before the revelation of the Gospel, and are so still in all those places where this Divine light hath not yet appeared. *The world by wisdom* (or philosophy) *knew not God*^a; and there is no reason to think it ever would have known him. It lay in darkness, thick and unconquerable by human means, like the shadow of death; out of which the Gospel hath brought us into a *marvellous light*^b. But it hath been shewn above, that the knowledge of the Gospel is a benefit, for which, under GOD, we are indebted to the Grace of JESUS CHRIST, in giving himself for us. Before his death, indeed, he planted the seeds of Divine truth among one people; but it was not till after his exaltation, that the Sun of Righteousness arose upon a benighted world. The publication of the Gospel to men of all nations, was at once a happy fruit of his death, and a clear proof of his advancement to the right hand of power; since it is certain, that without the miraculous gifts and powers shed down by him on his Apostles and Ministers, and without a Divine hand assisting at it, that great work could never have been accomplished.

G g 2

Now,

^a 1 Cor. i. 21.^b 1 Pet. ii. 9.

Now, to affirm that the Gospel instructs us in the duties of true piety and virtue, better than any other doctrine ever taught in the world before, is not saying much. We may go further, and venture to assert, that if whatever was wisely and justly said upon the subject of morals, by all the Sages of antiquity, were collected together, and separated from the great mass of error and folly with which it is mingled in the writings of the best of them, it would still, though very valuable, be unfit to bear a comparison with what was occasionally taught by CHRIST and his illiterate Apostles. In their teachings, we meet with nothing ostentatious, superfluous, or vainly curious; nothing unreasonable, superstitious, weak, or trifling; much less of a corrupt and vicious tendency. They are, in the matter of them, from beginning to end, pure, simple, and sublime, bearing every where upon them marks of Divine wisdom and authority.—Moreover, the Gospel fulfils the Law and the Prophets, and perfects all former revelations of GOD. As sure as there is a GOD above us, he must be such as the Gospel represents him to be, and such also must be the worship which is acceptable to him. To contradict this with any colour of reason, has been found beyond the power of the acutest malice

malice and prejudice. The Gospel does not address itself to brute creatures, but to those who are rational. It encourages and requires the faithful exercise of that leading faculty of man, which we call Reason; and all its words, fairly interpreted, are perfectly consonant thereto; but they are not built upon human reasonings, or enforced by them only. That method of address was not suitable to their proper character, and would have rendered them weak and ineffectual, if not suspicious. They are delivered as the Oracles of God, and enjoined by an authority from which there is no appeal. And as this Divine philosophy does not amuse us with barren speculations, but is a popular and practical science, wholly intended to sanctify the heart, and govern the life, it does not require capacity and penetration to understand it, so much as an honest mind, which hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He who applies this to it, though he be otherwise simple and unlearned, will soon be made wise unto salvation.

NEED I use any words to shew the greatness and importance of this benefit? — that men of all ranks, even the poorest, should have in their hands a perfect and infallible rule of life, brought them from Heaven,

G g 3 teaching

teaching them how to fear GOD, to be useful to others, and happy in themselves for ever? Of such a treasure, every one must immediately acknowledge the immense value; and this treasure we have obtained without our own cares or labours, through the voluntary poverty of JESUS CHRIST for our sakes. But what avail any treasures, if they are not rightly used? Gratitude to our Master should teach us highly to prize this one, to be more careful about it than we commonly are about a thousand things, which are trifles in comparison of it; and in short, to put it to the best use, and draw all the advantage from it that is possible. This is all the return our Benefactor calls for; and what progress should we not make in real wisdom and holiness, if we were duly attentive to this obligation? Did we but hear Him who is the Word and Wisdom of GOD, in all things whatsoever he hath said unto us; and learn of Him, with some portion of that meek and humble mind with which he taught, and follow Him alone as the true light of the world, we should not fail to become *perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*^c. Our minds, under this Divine culture, would be as a watered garden, or a field which the LORD hath blessed, on which all the virtues would grow, and thrive

^c 2 Tim. iii. 17.

thrive with increasing vigour: We should not walk any more as those who are of the night and of darkness^d, but as the children of the light and of the day^e; yea, should shine as lights in the world, holding forth, by our good conversation, the word of life^f. But,

2d. BESIDE the necessary instructions and rules of true religion, our DIVINE MASTER hath, by his death, confirmed promises to us, which none but GOD could give, and which are highly conducive to our perfection. Of most of these promises we have largely spoken already, and shall now only rehearse the chief of them very briefly, such as these following:—That all manner of sin and transgression shall be forgiven to them who truly repent; that GOD will aid all our good endeavours, and crown them with success, and will never suffer us to be tempted above that we are able^g; that if we cleave to him in faith and love, all things shall be made subservient to our good^h; that we shall receive a suitable supply for our bodily wants also, while we seek first the kingdom of GOD, and his righteousnessⁱ; that nothing shall be denied to our prayers, put up to GOD in the

G g 4

name

^d 1 Thess. v. 5.

^e Eph. v. 8.

^f Philip. ii. 15.

^g 1 Cor. x. 13.

^h Rom. viii. 28.

ⁱ Matth. vi. 33.

name of CHRIST^j; that, through divine support, all our present trials, labours, and sufferings for GOD, shall have a happy issue, and abundant fruits; and finally, that tho' we die, we shall be raised again to an immortal life, to an inheritance reserved for us in Heaven, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away^k.—Can any-thing greater, or more desirable, enter into the mind of man, than these promises? and could they ever have entered there without revelation? If we withdraw from the society and practices of the wicked, and live as Christians, *GOD will be OUR GOD, and we shall be His people: He will receive us, and be a Father to us, and we shall be the Sons and Daughters of THE LORD ALMIGHTY^l*.

THESE, and such as these, are the promises of the Gospel; and *all the promises of GOD in CHRIST, are Yea and Amen^m*; that is, consistent, true, and sure. They cannot fail of their accomplishment in due time and order, upon our performing the conditions of them: They are confirmed by manifold Divine miracles, and sealed with the blood of CHRIST; and the execution of them is absolutely secured by the power of this
risen

^j John xiv. 13, 14. ^k 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. ^l 2 Cor. vi. 16,—18.

^m 2 Cor. i. 20.

risen and exalted SAVIOUR. These promises are able to fill our hearts with everlasting consolation and good hope: But they are likewise designed to have a salutary influence on our whole moral conduct, and to make us *Partakers of a Divine Nature*ⁿ; while, both from their obvious tendency, and from gratitude to the Author of them, they do powerfully excite us to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of the LORD*^o. Lastly,

3d. IN consequence of these Divine instructions and promises, conveyed to them through the blood of CHRIST, all believers in Him are endowed with important privileges above the rest of mankind; which ought to serve them as new motives of religious gratitude, and new incitements to Christian duty. Thus, for instance, they are the chosen or elect people of GOD, his called, his sanctified, his beloved ones, and his new creatures. These, and such like, are not empty titles attached to the faith of CHRIST; but substantial benefits, fitted to produce noble exertions in us, and to form us to a heavenly temper. This might be shewn at large

ⁿ 2 Pet. i. 4. ^o 2 Cor. vii. 1.

large with regard to each of them*; but a few words will suffice to point out their tendency.

BLESSED, says the Psalmist, *is the people whose God is the LORD. Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee.* And do I partake of this blessedness? Am I *chosen* and selected of GOD to the knowledge of the truth^p, and the attainment of salvation? How zealous should I be, by my behaviour, to justify, if possible, a choice so honourable and beneficial to me; to shew that it hath not been improperly placed, and to render it effectual? Have I come, by Divine invitation, to the feast of fat things^q which GOD hath prepared for his people under the Gospel? and, am I *called* into the fellowship of the SON of GOD^r, to be a child and heir of GOD, along with him? With what profound humility and thankfulness should I demean myself before GOD? and with what care to walk worthy of this high calling^s? What diligence should I use, by adding one christian virtue to another^t, and, abounding in all, to make my calling and election sure?—Again, am I through the offering

^p 2 Thess. ii. 13.

^q Isa. xxv. 6.

^r 1 Cor. i. 9.

^s Eph. iv. 1.

^t 2 Pet. i. 5,—10.

* See Dr Taylor's Key to the Apostolic Writings.

fering of the body of JESUS once for all⁷, and the blood of the covenant, *sanctified*, or separated from an unclean and wicked world, and peculiarly consecrated to the service of GOD? That separation is a strong engagement on me, to renounce all intimate and unnecessary fellowship with the workers of iniquity, to detest and shun their ways, and to be a Saint, not in name only, but in truth, even holy, according to my best capacity, as GOD is holy.—And since I have received so many great proofs of the *love* of GOD, and of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, toward me, I am prompted by nature itself, to love them in return, with sincerity and fervour, and to love my brethren for their sakes. *Put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, &c.*"

THIS is a short specimen of what our christian honours would do for our improvement in virtue, if we knew how to value and use them according to the views of GOD. To give another instance:—What sort of temper ought to be formed in us, by that quickening from spiritual death^x, and that *new creation*, which the Grace of GOD hath brought us? Some idea of this benefit may be conceived from the condition of a bankrupt,

⁷ Heb. x. 10, 29.

^v Col. iii. 12.

^{*} Eph. ii. 1.

rupt, so common in our days, who hath got his ruined fortunes repaired by the help of a kind and powerful friend. He is rescued from the hands of poverty and wretchedness; his debts are all discharged or remitted; he is again set upon his feet, as we say, and provided with an ample stock to begin the world anew. How will he proceed in future? Is it not to be expected, that, out of gratitude to his benefactor, as well as prudence to himself, he will be very attentive, and very earnest to improve the means of recovery, so seasonably afforded him? What would you think of him, if he should again neglect his affairs, and abandon himself once more to his pleasures? or should fold his hands in sloth, and contrive pretexts and excuses to justify his remissness, until he was plunged again in the same embarrassments, inability, and ruin, as before? You would not at least believe, that any one could be found capable, in such a situation, of rejecting the kind assistance tendered to him, and absolutely refusing to be relieved.—These things exhibit a faint image of an unbeliever, to whom the Gospel is preached without effect; or of a Christian, who forgets that he is *God's workmanship*¹ through CHRIST, and who does not stir himself up to act as a *new creature*².

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¹ Eph. ii. 10.² Gal. vi. 15.

THE like may be said of all the other privileges and honours which are derived to us through the death and resurrection of our LORD. Every one of them recommends and enforces a worthy conduct, and tends to nourish in us the seeds of universal goodness.

II. BUT we have not only motives of gratitude, flowing from the blood of CHRIST, to animate us in the course of life marked out by him; we are farther engaged to abound in the work of the LORD, by the strict obligations of *allegiance and fidelity*, which we owe to a Heavenly Master, who hath dearly bought us, and to whom we belong as his property. So says the Apostle to the Believers of Corinth, and in them to all other Christians: *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*^a. Observe the force and extent of this motive: If we are not our own, it cannot be just or safe for us either to live or die to ourselves. We are not at liberty to follow entirely the views of private interest, the impulses of passion, the bent of inclination, the suggestions of humour and caprice, nor indeed any other rule of conduct but what our Master hath pre-

^a 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

prescribed to us; nor can we lawfully abstract any portion of our time and service from him. This doctrine was well understood in St Paul's days, when the practice of domestic slavery was so universally established, and the great bulk of the human species were born to be the absolute property of a few. But there can be no difficulty in understanding it at any time, since it is implied in the most common rights of a master with regard to his servants, or a father's over his children. For it is evident that we belong to God by more sacred ties, and a more perfect right, than any one mortal can belong to another.

How is it, then, that we are not our own? It may be answered, because we neither gave being to ourselves, nor can continue it at our pleasure. We are the creatures, subjects, and property of him who grants us life and favour. And this consideration alone is of great moment to fix our hearts in an inviolable attachment to him; it is sufficient, if duly weighed, to determine aright the conduct of all rational creatures. But we Christians are happily supplied with others of the same tendency, beside this, which serve to strengthen it, and to press the ties of duty upon us with double force. The Apostle even omits altogether this natural right which
God

GOD has to our obedience, because it was obvious and common, and because there was another more lately founded, more peculiar to the Christian profession, and of more force to touch the hearts of men just emerged from the darkness of Paganism, into the glorious light of the Gospel. Therefore his address to them runs in this strain.—To your unspeakable benefit, you have been of late redeemed from bondage to false Gods, from the captivity of Satan, the slavery of vile lusts and passions; and are now become the servants and property of the True GOD, not only by Nature, as you were before, but also by Grace. Nor were you a cheap and easy purchase: your redemption cost nothing less than the Blood of his Beloved SON. Can any thing farther be necessary to make you yield yourselves heartily to the obedience of GOD through CHRIST, and exert all your faculties of body and mind for his honour? Or, will you, after experiencing so happy a change, return to the same bondage you were in before? Will you, by your words or works, deny the LORD that bought you^b, the only LORD GOD, and our LORD JESUS CHRIST^c? Who can express the folly, ingratitude, unfaithfulness, and disloyalty of such a conduct?—Keep me far from these crimes,

^b 2 Pet. ii. 1.^c Jude iv.

crimes, O my God! I am thy servant, thy servant by the strictest ties^d. Thou hast loosed my bonds; thou hast broke the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder^e. Thou hast brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay^f, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And of what value was I to thee, O LORD! that thou shouldest have redeemed me at such a price? No, it was purely for my good that thou didst it; out of mere kindness and compassion to me, notwithstanding my unworthiness. And can I ever forget the obligation?—then let my right hand forget its cunning, and let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. Henceforth I resolve that nothing shall alienate from thee, the Supreme and Righteous Owner, my body, my soul, my heart, hands, abilities, labours, relaxations, or any thing that is mine.

THE same motive of fidelity is urged again by our Apostle, in his Epistle to the Romans^g, when he argues, that whatever we profess, we are in fact the *servants* either of sin or of righteousness, according as we take the one or the other of these for our master in the conduct of life; that if we give ourselves

^d Psal. cxvi. 16.^e Psal. cvii. 16.^f Psal. xl. 2.^g Rom. vi. 16.

selves to sin, the conclusion and reward of that service is death, meaning death everlasting; if to righteousness, our reward is justification and eternal life: But that by embracing the faith of the Gospel, we have solemnly renounced the service of sin, and bound ourselves to another Master, even Righteousness; and that therefore we cannot, without violating our sacred covenant engagements, yield obedience any more to sin, or suffer it to have dominion over us, but ought to be constant in the service of Righteousness, or of GOD, which is true freedom and happiness. For, what can be more comely and honourable, or more delightful and salutary, than to serve the LORD our GOD, in the performance of all righteous works, whose end and reward is eternal life? This is the liberty to which we are called by the Gospel^h; the glorious liberty of the children of GOD, the liberty which CHRIST gives us through the knowledge of the truth. *If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed*ⁱ. And again, *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*^k; true, complete, and perpetual liberty, implying a happy exemption from the servitude of sin, from the yoke of the Mosaical ceremonies, and from the sentence of eternal condemnation. How thankful should

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^h Gal. v. 13.ⁱ John viii. 36.^k 2 Cor. iii. 17.

we be for our entrance into such a service, and how zealous to perform the duties of it!

FOR, if you really desire to fulfil so great an obligation, you will not only avoid every thing inconsistent with the service of GOD, but study to do honour to it by your diligence, faithfulness, and perseverance. Good servants love their master, and wish to have him and his service well thought of. You will act in such a manner, as to make it appear, that GOD is, in your esteem, the best of all masters, and the most worthy to be served and obeyed; that his commands are, wise and equitable, his protection invincible, and his promises equally munificent and faithful. You will shew, by your behaviour, that the LORD is good and gracious, that there is no unrighteousness in him¹, and that he never forsakes his servants. Far from seeming to regret the having given yourself up to him, or growing weary of his yoke, you will discover more affection for it, the more experience you have of it, and length of time will only dispose you to bear it with greater alacrity and joy. Finding a great present reward in the consolation of serving him, you will abide with him continually, and stand fast for him against the strongest temptations.

¹ Psal. xcii. 15.

ations.—‘ Yes, O my GOD ! you will say to
‘ him, I do firmly resolve to deny my own
‘ will, in order to follow thine ; counting
‘ it my supreme happiness to be thine, and
‘ thine only ; to live for no other but thee,
‘ and to depend on thee alone. This conduct
‘ I judge to be as fit in itself, as it is safe for
‘ me. Thy service, in its hardest duties, is
‘ more dear to me than any liberty I can
‘ enjoy out of it ; nor am I ever at any time
‘ so perfectly free as when I am most strictly
‘ bound to thy commands, and submis-
‘ sive to thy government. This is the cove-
‘ nant I have entered into with the LORD
‘ my GOD ; and to this, upon the most
‘ deliberate and mature examination, I see
‘ nothing preferable or equal, in the whole
‘ compass of being. I place it therefore
‘ above every thing else ; and for it, am will-
‘ ing to renounce riches, honours, pleasures,
‘ and whatever this world can present as
‘ most alluring to the heart of man. In
‘ obedience to thee, Almighty Father ! I do
‘ cheerfully resign the hope, or give up the
‘ possession of these things, and count them
‘ but dung that I may win CHRIST.’

SUCH are the sentiments we imbibe, from
the serious contemplation of that new right
which GOD the FATHER, and our LORD

JESUS CHRIST, have acquired to our obedience and services by the redemption of the cross; and these sentiments cannot but have a great effect to inspire every one who feels them (as all Christians ought to do) with zeal, and activity, and constancy in the performance of his duties. Let us proceed to a

III. THIRD motive, which was mentioned on this Head, to carry us on to perfection, the principle of honour. For, without doubt, it tends mightily to animate us in every worthy pursuit, that we value ourselves justly, and have a proper sense of our own dignity. There is, indeed, a false pride abounding in the world, that makes us ascribe to ourselves excellencies which we have not, or over-rate those we have, or claim to be valued for things not truly valuable; while our highest aim is only to attain honour and distinction among men. This pride disdains not to dwell in a low and ignoble mind; it even finds there its proper abode: and being the fruitful source of impiety to God, and injustice to men, it cannot be too carefully guarded against. But there is likewise a laudable and honest pride, if we may call it by that name, for it is the inseparable companion of modesty and humility; a pride which operates as a restraint from all vicious actions,

actions, and a powerful incentive to works of real goodness. Influenced by this principle, a man will not stoop to commit sin, because he sees in it the disgrace of his nature and character; but will ardently aspire after virtue, as what alone becomes him, and is worthy of him. In reality, if so many persons in the world give themselves up to vicious indulgences, it is partly because they do not know their own worth, and therefore do not justly respect themselves, or the Divine image within them. And what else can be expected from those who hold themselves to be in common with the beasts of the field, a composition of animated clay, or atoms put together, and dissolved again by chance; not under the protection or care of a moral governour, left to be the sport of wild and furious passions for a while, and then to lose their existence for ever?—Do such views of human nature inspire noble sentiments, or lead to great and good designs? No; they rather press down our spirits to earth and sense, and their tendency is to a grovelling life, and an unbounded selfishness. Yet this is the result of infidel principles, and of what is often recommended to the present age, under the name of *philosophy*. Here they issue at last, however plausibly they may be coloured; and if those who embrace them do

any thing truly praise-worthy, they are more indebted to the goodness of their nature, than of their learning.

It is true, the Light of Nature alone gives other and better thoughts of man ; and under its direction, ancient wisdom delivered this among the most important precepts of a worthy conduct—*Reverence thyself*. But it is from the Word of GOD that we best learn how to estimate our own worth, and particularly from the Redemption of JESUS CHRIST. Wherefore, but to teach us this lesson, was the creation of man recorded with so many marks of his pre-eminence^m above all the other works of GOD here below ? And for what other end were the people of Israel so often exhorted, not to defile themselves with the gross abominations of the Heathens, since they had the honour to be more near and dear to GOD than any other nation ?

BUT, to know rightly what we are, and of how great value in the sight of GOD, let us return to the Cross of CHRIST, and there contemplate the SON of GOD given, and giving himself for us ; and let us reflect that we are *not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*ⁿ. Silver and gold are among the most valuable

^m Gen. ii. 3.

ⁿ 1 Pet. i. 18.

valuable of earthly things, and may often suffice to redeem the body from temporal captivity; but are by no means equal to the worth of the soul, of which the redemption is too precious to be procured by such means^o. This purchase could be made only by the blood of CHRIST, which, as it expresses his perfect innocence and purity, is most dear to GOD; and as it was soon changed into a higher state, in the Glorified Body of our SAVIOUR, is justly opposed to all corruptible things. Hence we may learn the true estimation of ourselves, as well as the love of GOD towards us. *Precious*, says the Psalmist, *in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints^p*. If that be true of common saints, how much more of Him who knew no sin? And yet his blood was shed for us. Did we consider this, we should doubtless be more attentive to the interest of our souls than we often are, and not hazard it for a trifle, far less cast away wantonly what is so highly prized by our Heavenly Father.

INDEED we ought to conceive high thoughts of human nature, from the very appearance of JESUS CHRIST in it: *That the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us^q*; that ALMIGHTY GOD deigned to tabernacle with men^r in a Person of their own

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order,

^o Psal. xlix. 8. ^p Psal. cxvi. 15. ^q John i. 14. ^r Chap. xiv. 10.

order, and to manifest his power, wisdom, goodness, and holiness, in a man like themselves. This was doing great honour to the whole human race: and the honour was much increased by what this Divine Person suffered on our account.—But we cannot fully comprehend the worth of our nature, without looking yet further to the honour conferred on it, in the exaltation of our SAVIOUR. How glorious is it to us, that one of our own kind, the Man CHRIST JESUS, with whom we are so intimately connected as to be, in the language of the Apostle, *members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*^s, is advanced to universal empire over angels as well as men, and has all power given him in heaven and earth! Who can disparage a nature thus dignified by Him who is the Fountain of all honour and power? Who can think meanly of it? especially as this is an honour in which we are destined to share with our LORD, if we endeavour to be his faithful disciples. For, *To him that overcometh, says he, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne*^t. Here is an object worthy of a great mind. This is the true ambition of man. The very thought of such glory tends to raise

^s Eph. v. 30.^t Rev. iii. 21.

raise and refine the human soul, and to infuse into her a grandeur and elevation of sentiment she could never otherwise have conceived.

FURTHER, to cherish this generous principle of human nature, we ought not to forget what was touched at before*, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST hath already, through the humiliation of his death, ennobled all his sincere followers, and raised them to spiritual honours and dignities, which are of great efficacy to set them above the debasing corruptions of this world, and to make them pant after the sublimest attainments in moral excellence. Let us only think what kind of conversation becometh *Saints*? How those should demean themselves, whom GOD hath chosen to be *his people*^w? What righteousness, peace, and joy, should reign in *his family*^x? what purity in *his temples*^y? what love and reverence in *his children*^z? and what a noble spirit may be expected to dwell in those who are made *Kings and Priests* unto him^a?—For, to these, and many other like honours, believers are promoted through the blood of CHRIST, and furnished with

^v Eph. v. 3. ^w Rom. ix. 25. ^x Eph. ii. 19. ^y 1 Cor. vi. 19.

^z Gal. iv. 6. ^a 1 Pet. ii. 9. Rev. i. 5.

* See page 473,—475.

with ample means to support the credit and dignity which belongs to them.

By virtue of our union with the LORD JESUS, we are invested with many pre-eminences above the rest of mankind ; which should not puff us up with pride and vanity in comparing ourselves with them, but should inspire us with a more fervent gratitude to GOD than they can be supposed to have, remove us farther from base and vicious practices, and lead us to a more excellent way of life. The more the Divine Grace advanceth us, the more humbly should we walk before GOD, and be the more careful to please him. We are, with our SAVIOUR, if I may so speak, exalted to universal empire, and have all our enemies put under our feet: for, *all things are ours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come^b*; all are put in our power, if we will, and rendered ministerial to our salvation. *Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption^c*; and we are heirs of GOD together with him^d. Mean and poor as we may be in our outward circumstances, there is nothing truly great, or good, or happy, which we might not either actually possess,

or

^b 1 Cor. iii. 22.

^c Verse 30.

^d Rom. viii. 17.

or justly aspire to, provided only that we knew the gift of GOD, and that, imbibing a spirit suitable to the dignity to which he hath raised us, we did not degrade and debase ourselves by sin.

ON these accounts it may be safely affirmed, that no doctrine was ever taught in the world so ennobling to human nature as the Gospel, or so perfective of the reason of man. Most unjustly do the followers of a vain philosophy represent believers in CHRIST as persons of little and narrow minds. That reproach is more truly due to themselves. The philosophy of JESUS CHRIST is calculated to form, and hath formed in innumerable instances, men not only honest and faithful, but great and excellent, in every department of life. It doth naturally expand and elevate the human soul, take her off from all low and ignoble pursuits, inspire her with high and generous thoughts, and point her views and efforts continually toward that excellence, which would raise us above ourselves, and stamp us with the image of GOD.—But, lastly,

IV. THESE holy endeavours are mightily strengthened by the example of CHRIST, whether we consider it as an example of obedience,

obedience, or of reward. As an example of reward, it will more properly occur to be spoken of in the next Section. Here let us only contemplate the pattern of virtue which CHRIST hath set before us, particularly in his death, where it appears in the utmost perfection.

EXAMPLE, it is commonly said, and very justly, is better than precept*: It speaks more to the heart, and allures with greater force.

* Here the ancient Philosophers were for the most part extremely defective. Thus their character is drawn by one who will not be suspected of having charged the picture beyond the truth:—‘ In their writings and conversation,’ says Mr Gibbon, ‘ they asserted the dignity of reason; but they resigned their actions to the commands of law, and of custom. . . . They concealed the sentiments of an Atheist, under the sacerdotal robes. . . . And they approached with the same inward contempt, and the same external reverence, the altars of the Lybian, the Olympian, and the Capitoline Jupiter.’ Which is as much as to say, that these Philosophers were a set of despicable hypocrites, who contradicted in their actions the plainest principles of reason, while they professed in their words and writings to assert its dignity; and that they had more knowledge than the vulgar, only to be more worthless and criminal.—It is to be hoped our Modern Philosophers, who deny revelation, such of them at least as live in the British dominions, are of a very different character, they not being under the same necessity to save appearances that the ancient Sages were. They have no occasion to profess any regard for Christianity, unless when they think the mask of friendship will enable them to give it a deeper wound.

force. In a Teacher of Religion especially, example ought always to accompany precept; and his doctrine, however excellent in itself, will be sure to lose the best half of its power, if it be contradicted, and belied, or not duly seconded, by his life. To the doctrine of CHRIST, we have already seen that nothing was wanting which could render it a perfect rule for obtaining salvation. He delivered the words of eternal life; but his words derive a force and energy from his example, which nothing else could have given them. They are not the plausible speculations of a Philosopher, who spake honourably of virtue indeed, but lived at his ease, and died in peace, without ever being brought to any severe trial, or experiencing at all the difficulty *in practice*, of what served to amuse himself and his disciples *in theory*. Had that been the condition of our Blessed Saviour on earth, his instructions, with all their purity, would have remained speculations still; fine sayings at best, but useless rules; and being deemed impracticable, they would have gained no regard in the conduct of life. But, delivered as they were by him, under the inconveniences of poverty, in the face of bitter and unrelenting persecution, and, if I may so say, within sight of the cross, where they were at length actually sealed with his blood,

blood, they have their proper weight and authority, and come home to our hearts in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.

BUT, besides the confirmation and inforcement which it gives to his doctrine, the example of CHRIST, especially under his last sufferings, is in itself highly instructing and edifying to all the lovers of virtue. For, it demonstrates the existence of pure unfulfilled virtue, free from any base mixture, which some have pretended was never found on earth. If a man can be truly possessed of virtue, who enjoys an uninterrupted course of worldly prosperity, it is certain his virtue is not so conspicuous and unequivocal as it may be rendered by the traverses of fortune. While he meets with nothing to ruffle his temper, or disturb his peace; while the world heaps its favours on him, and all his designs succeed according to his wish; let him be adorned with all the perfections humanity is capable of, in such circumstances, there is room still left for the traducers of virtue to alledge, that he adheres to it only because he finds a present advantage in it, and has no temptation to the contrary; as it was said in a well-known case, *Doth Job fear GOD for nought*? And indeed, in such a situation,

^c Job. i. 9.

situation, it cannot be certainly known, unless to GOD and the man's own heart, what share the motives of this world have in directing his conduct. But when he behaves well amidst alarming dangers and afflictions*, and stands fast to the post of duty, though it prove the means of loading him with extreme disgrace and pain, yea though it leave him no other comfort in life, save the testimony of a good conscience, and the approbation of GOD; then doth his virtue shine forth with undisputed lustre, and the purity and genuineness of it are set above the reach of suspicion. Had not the SAVIOUR of the world been persecuted unto death, the example of his virtue would have wanted something

* It hath been remarked, and it well deserves our attention, how exactly the idea which a Heathen Philosopher formed of a truly virtuous man, was realised in the life of our SAVIOUR. Without knowing any-thing of him, Plato describes his character and circumstances after this manner: 'He is a simple and ingenuous man, desiring, not the appearance, but the reality of goodness. We must take from him the appearance of goodness: For, if he shall appear to be just, he shall have honours and rewards; and thus it may be uncertain whether he be such for the sake of justice, or on account of the honours and rewards that are given him. Let him be stript of every thing but justice. Whilst he doth no injustice, let him have the reputation of doing the greatest. Let him be tortured for justice, not yielding to reproach, and such things as arise from it, but immovable till death.'

Plato Rep. lib. ii.

thing of the glory which now adorns it, and for which it will ever challenge the admiration of all the Saints in heaven and earth. It was the Cross alone that could set the goodness of his character in a proper light, as superior to all temptations, as altogether worthy of the only begotten of the FATHER, worthy of the Divine Instructor and Redeemer of mankind, and worthy of the greatness and holiness of the True GOD, whose Name he came to manifest unto us. His example, in these circumstances of trial, shews us better than a thousand arguments, what is due to the authority of the Most High; for it demonstrates the justice and holiness of his severest commandments, that obedience is due to him from all his rational creation, and in all cases without exception, and consequently that disobedience may be justly punished. It represents to us the Moral Governour of the Universe, in his real greatness and glory.

THIS example is of large extent, and comprehends many particulars. Not to speak of our SAVIOUR's former life, there is hardly a virtue tending to the perfection of a moral character, of which he did not exhibit a distinct and shining pattern during his last sufferings. Here all the virtues were collected,

lected, as in a narrow space, and at the same time every one shewn to the best advantage.

—Toward GOD, a humility, submission, and self-denial, which knew no reserves or limitations; a faith in his wisdom, power, and goodness, which the darkest scenes of adversity could not stagger; a trust unshaken, a love unbounded, and an undoubting confidence, that the end of patient virtue, under the Divine protection, would not fail to be happy; and all these expressed by suitable devotions.

—Toward Men, a benevolence truly generous and disinterested; a meekness and gentleness, which could not be ruffled by the exasperations of reproach and insult, or the sharpness of bodily pain; pity to his cruel tormentors, and prayers for their salvation, instead of regarding them with sentiments of hatred and revenge; a patriotic tenderness for his country notwithstanding its ingratitude to him, and a deep concern for the miseries with which he saw it was soon to be visited on account of its sins; private friendship, and filial affection, in the most striking proofs of them; a divine compassion to penitent sinners; even conjugal duty, in its sublimest exertions^f; in general, a determined preference of truth and virtue, according to God's will, above every thing else held dear

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and

^f Eph. v. 25.

and valuable among men ; and finally, the dignity of conscious innocence, and of real greatness, with a becoming firmness, recollection, and composure of mind, displayed throughout the whole series of his unparalleled sufferings.--These were, as more largely shewn in the former part of this Discourse, the virtues exemplified by our Great LORD and MASTER, in the closing scene of his life; and by these, he put the last hand to that complete model of holiness which his example affords to all the children of GOD.

ALL these virtues and duties are comprehended in one word, *Obedience*,—Obedience to the will of GOD; which was the grand spring of all that our SAVIOUR did or suffered on earth ; what gave merit to his life, and procured his advancement after death ; and what must be the chief motive of our conduct also, if ever we expect to be happy in the enjoyment of GOD. Obedience supposes a subject; and a rightful Governour ; and implies such a regard in the former, to the will and authority of the latter, as determines him resolutely to follow the same, how contrary soever it may be to the inferior inclinations of his nature, or ungrateful to the feelings of sense. This obedience the SON of GOD yielded to his FATHER, in the most

most perfect manner : By it, he obtained power to save, in the highest sense of the word ; and by imitating it, we become partakers of his salvation. Obedience is better in the sight of God, than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. The fat of rams is not to be compared with obedience. Obedience is more acceptable to God, than if you should offer him the cattle upon a thousand hills ; nay, more precious than the blood of CHRIST himself, since it was not his blood, simply considered, that redeemed us, but his blood as expressive of unspotted innocence, or perfect obedience, *the Blood of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot*^s.

HENCE it is, that, *by the obedience of One, many shall be made righteous*^b. But if we imagine that we shall be made righteous by the obedience of CHRIST, without imitation, and without a faithful endeavour to be conformed to it in our practice, we do miserably deceive ourselves. As surely as we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the SON of GODⁱ, in the glories of the Heavenly state, so surely are we predestinated to be conformed to the image of his obedience and righteousness, in this state of trial ; and between these, there is established, in the

I i 2 eternal

^s 1 Pet. i. 19.

^b Rom. v. 19.

ⁱ Chap. viii. 29.

eternal decrees of Heaven, an indissoluble connection. Obey we must, if we hope to be saved by CHRIST ; and obey like him, as far as we are able, without limitation or reserve : For, GOD ALMIGHTY deserves to be obeyed by his children, at the expence of all their other interests ; and he would not be GOD, if less might suffice for him. Can we desire a more full and affecting proof of this, than the obedience of JESUS CHRIST ? If your LORD and MASTER hesitated not to embrace the Cross, with all its horrors of pain and ignominy, in order to obey GOD, and fulfil his will ; how far, Christian, ought your obedience to go ? What have you that you are entitled to keep back from your GOD, after the sacrifice of duty which JESUS CHRIST hath offered to him ? You will own that you owe him the sacrifice of your life, should he require it ; and if so, you surely owe him, by a stronger right, the sacrifice of all your irregular desires and passions, of your humours, inclinations, interests, powers, faculties, talents, and means, which you should voluntarily lay at his feet, and yield up to his service, to be wholly directed and employed according to his good pleasure. For you can never reasonably think that any reserves or exceptions are to be made by you in keeping the commandments of GOD, or
that

that any other object may lawfully rival him in your affections, while you contemplate the Captain of your Salvation expiring on a cross, to honour his authority and laws, and to finish the work which he had given him to do.

AFTER what has been said, it cannot be needful to insist at great length, in proving the obligation we are under, to imitate this great example, which is both a rule and a motive for attaining Christian perfection. To draw us to the imitation of CHRIST, the amiableness of his character, the services he hath done us, and the relation we stand in to him, might seem sufficient. But to these is added the authority of his commands, often and peremptorily enjoining this duty to all his disciples: *If any man, says he, will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me*^k; that is, let him imitate me, whatever afflictions he may meet with in the way, and though it bring him at length to the same kind of death which is appointed for me. *I have given you an example, says he again, that ye should do as I have done unto you*^l; an example of humility and love, never to be forgotten in your behaviour toward one another. In like manner, his Apostle, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*^m.

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^k Matth. xvi. 24.^l John xiii. 15.^m 1 Cor. xi. 1.

He is the true unerring pattern for us all; *As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him*^a. You may be placed in very different circumstances, and may have actions to perform very different in kind from those to which he was called; but whatever be your circumstances, *let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*^o; the same temper of humble piety and fervent charity. — *We that are strong* (or think ourselves so) *ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves; for even Christ pleased not himself*^p. Here was self-denial for the good of others. — Again, *Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind*^q. Fortify your minds against all manner of sin as he did, and resolve to endure any sufferings rather than yield to it. By the imitation of him, you will maintain an universal purity of manners. To conclude, *If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God; for even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*^r.

THESE, and many other passages, shew how strictly we are bound, as Christians, to imitate

^a Col. ii. 6.^o Philip. ii. 5.^p Rom. xv. 1.^q 1 Pet. iv. 1.^r Chap. ii. 20, 21.

imitate our Master, even in the patience and obedience of the cross, when circumstances do so require it, much more in the ordinary duties of sincere piety and virtue. His example is a sublime and perfect model, which none can copy exactly; nor can the best of his disciples follow him, but at an immense distance. But we should be daily growing up to the stature of perfect men in him^s; and the nearest and best resemblance we can attain of him, is by edifying ourselves in love or charity. In running the Christian race, we must *look to JESUS the Author and Finisher of our faith*^t, and keep his pattern constantly in our eye. Our consciences must bear us witness, that we are holding on in our Master's way, faithfully tracing his footsteps, and following him as fast as we can, otherways we are none of his.

AND thus far concerning the moral influence of CHRIST's death, whether for reclaiming us from an evil course, or for carrying us forward in the paths of righteousness. The whole of what has been said on these heads in the two last Sections, nay the substance of the former Chapter also, is briefly comprehended in these memorable words of the Apostle Peter, where, speaking of CHRIST,

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^s Eph. iv. 13.^t Heb. xii. 2.

he says, *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin might live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed*^a. The words are wonderfully emphatical and comprehensive. CHRIST did not, like the High-Priest under the Law, put our sins upon the head of a devoted animal, such as the Scape-goat^v, which carried * away the iniquities of the people of Israel into a land not inhabited, to signify that they should never more return to the people's condemnation. CHRIST, on the contrary, did willingly become, in his own person, our Scape-goat. He took our sins upon himself. Like a generous friend who relieves one whom he sees ready to sink under an oppressive load, by receiving it for a little upon his own shoulders, because he knows where to cast it down, and put it away, that it may oppress no more: So CHRIST bare our sins in his own body, up to the cross, the tree of ignominy and torture; there to be crucified with him, destroyed, and blotted out for ever. For, by dying the death of the cross, in confirmation

^a 1 Pet. ii. 24.

^v Lev. xvi. 20,—22.

* There are two different senses of bearing sin in Scripture. One is, when the guilty person suffers the punishment due to his sin, Lev. v. i. and many other places. The other is, when the sin of the guilty person is carried away, as the Scape-goat bore the iniquities of the people, and as CHRIST bore our sins. See Isa. liii. 4. compared with Matth. viii. 17. See also Heb. ix. 28.

ation of the new covenant, he hath secured to us the remission of all past sins repented of and forsaken, and hath furnished us also with the most powerful argument to abstain from sin for the future. So that if the matter do not stick at us, our sins are effectually carried off by his crucified body^w; and we are delivered for ever, both from the punishment and the practice of them. But in order to that, we must take care not to oppose the design of his death^{*}, which was expressly appointed and submitted to for this end, *that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness*; the former expressing true repentance, and the latter proficiency in virtue. And whenever this end is gained in us, it may be truly said that *we are healed by his stripes*; because, what he suffered in our behalf, has had its proper effect, which was to cure our spiritual maladies, and restore our souls to perfect health and soundness^x.—And thus we are come to the last particular of our subject, to wit,

SECT. V.

^w Matth. viii. 17.^x Isa. liii. 4,—6.

* Some say, The death of CHRIST benefits us by paying our debts; others, by procuring the remission of them. Why should they hate or think ill of one another, for a difference of that kind; especially when they are agreed upon the general point, and that the benefit of our SAVIOUR'S death will extend to us only upon the condition that we are taught, and persuaded by it, to die to sin, and live unto righteousness?

SECTION V.

CHRIST'S Death a Ground of Consolation to Good Christians.

LIGHT is sown for the righteous, says the Psalmist, and gladness for the upright in heart^a. When the soul is duly purged from sin, and seasoned with piety and virtue, it begins at length to be capable of true pleasure. Nothing therefore remains of what was proposed in this Essay, but to shew what there is in the Death of CHRIST, to inspire his sincere followers with inward peace and joy, and to administer comfort to them under all the afflictions of this life.

GREAT and manifold are the consolations which we have in CHRIST^b. The whole of his Gospel is properly nothing else but *good tidings of great joy to all people*^c. Of the Disciples of Moses it was justly said, *Blessed are they that know the joyful sound*^d. But this is still more emphatically true of the Disciples of CHRIST: *Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear: for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and*

^a Psal. xcvi. 11.^b Philip. ii. 1.^c Luke ii. 10.^d Psal. lxxxix. 15.

and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them^c. Every thing in the Gospel is calculated to afford solid comfort to the heart of man; its instructions, which exhibit the most lovely views of the character and providence of God, particularly of his dispensations toward mankind; its laws, which are holy, just and good, and not grievous or burthensome, pointing out the unerring road to true happiness; its promises, so liberal and magnificent; its counsels and warnings, most gracious and faithful; the honours it confers on us, the hopes it sets before us, the present succours it provides, and the ample and satisfactory evidence with which the whole is supported. Have we not cause to be filled *with all joy and peace in believing this doctrine*^f? And was it without reason that the pious chamberlain of Ethiopia, when converted to the faith of it, *went on his way rejoicing*^g? The Apostle Peter doubtless expresses both the duty and the privilege of good Christians, when, by way of praise, and exhortation to continue in well-doing, he says to them, *Ye love Jesus Christ, without having seen him; and though now ye see him not, yet, believing in him, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*. How indeed can it be otherwise,

^c Matth. xiii. 16, 17. ^f Rom. xv. 13. ^g Acts viii. 39.

otherwise, when *the peace of God that passeth all understanding, keeps their minds and hearts through Jesus Christ^h*? when this Divine SAVIOUR hath left his peace with themⁱ, and hath used every fit precaution that his joy may remain in them, and that their joy may be full^k? *Ye believe in God, says he to them, believe also in me: Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid^l*. In short, by the Gospel, GOD hath given us strong, substantial, everlasting consolation^m. Joy in the Holy Ghostⁿ, or a holy spiritual joy, is one of those things without which his kingdom cannot subsist in us; and the faithful subjects of it are not only entitled, but commanded, to *rejoice evermore^o*. Nothing is more essential to the Christian temper, than joy; not indeed the loose, frothy, dissipated joy of the world, which is often attended or followed with an aching heart; but the serene and substantial joy which arises from the practice of virtue, from well-regulated passions, from the testimony of a good conscience, from a sense of GOD's love, and the sure hope of eternal life. If this joy were established in our hearts, it would keep them pure, and the allurements of criminal pleasure would tempt us in vain.

Now,

^h Philip. iv. 7.

ⁱ John xiv. 17.

^k Chap. xv. 11.

^l Chap. xiv. 1.

^m 2 Thess. ii. 16.

ⁿ Rom. xiv. 17.

^o 1 Thess. v. 16.

Now, it is certain that all the consolations of the Gospel flow, more remotely at least, from the humiliations of CHRIST, since without these, as we have seen, the joyful reviving sound of its doctrines would never have reached our ears. But, besides this, there are divers consolations very needful for us here below, which arise immediately, as it were, out of the Cross itself, and which our subject requires to be briefly explained: For hereby we have the comfort to know, that affliction doth only render us so much the more conformable to our SAVIOUR; that no degree of it in this life is inconsistent with the favour of GOD; that, after enduring it with patience, we shall be gloriously rewarded; and lastly, that, in the very depth of it, we may safely rely on the sympathy and succour of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, as well as the protection of ALMIGHTY GOD. These consolations are provided for us in all our afflictions, of whatever kind they be, but especially such as we suffer in the way of our duty, and on account of it: And they spring peculiarly from the Cross of CHRIST, and could never have been afforded us by any other means.

I. IN affliction, we are made to know
the fellowship of our Saviour's sufferings^p, and
have

^p Philip. iii. 10.

have a clearer proof of our conformity to him; which St Paul thought a great privilege. JESUS CHRIST is none of those task-masters, *who bind heavy burdens, and lay them upon mens shoulders, but will not themselves touch them with one of their fingers*^a. He hath not left us to explore the rugged path of adversity for ourselves, with the help only of good precepts and directions; he hath moreover smoothed it before us, by his own example. In order to be our companion in affliction, he chose to share the common lot of mortality, and even to lead the way to us through all the sorrows which may in any likelihood befall us during the journey of life. Few of the miseries incident to human nature in this state of trial, were unexperienced by him; none at least of the more severe and intollerable kind did he escape, except such as arise from personal depravity, and the consciousness of guilt.

Now, the society of others in affliction tends strongly to fortify the mind; especially the society of the great and good. How cheerfully does the private soldier support the fatigues of the military service, when he sees his General bearing the heaviest of them in common with him?—It is related of
Thu-

^a Matth. xxiii. 4.

Thudippus, one of those friends of Phocion* who were condemned to die with him, that when he saw the executioner pounding the hemlock, he began to lament what a hard fortune it was for him to suffer unjustly on Phocion's account. "What, then, said this venerable Sage to him, dost thou not think it an honour to die with Phocion?" He ought in reality to have thought so: But how much more may we be animated, and think ourselves honoured, when we suffer with JESUS CHRIST? The meanest of his followers surely have no cause to complain, while their lot is not more destitute of outward comforts, than was that of their great Heavenly Master. *The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord*; it is well if he be on a footing with him. The company of such a Master cannot but give dignity to the most abject state of poverty, while it is attended with innocence; and our sharing affliction with him, adds new strength to our hope.

FOR, on the other hand, if we lived always in ease and affluence, loaded with the favours of this world, we might have just ground for uneasiness and apprehension ;
because,

* Matth. x. 24.

* Plutarch in Phocion.

because, how well soever we were disposed to imitate our SAVIOUR, one important mark of resemblance to him would still unavoidably be wanting in us, to wit, poverty and affliction: And we should have reason for continual fear lest so great a difference in our outward condition might occasion a like difference, or rather opposition to JESUS, in the state and temper of our mind. It is by no means a strange thing for riches and prosperity to beget pride and irreligion, avarice, voluptuousness and sensuality, with all their kindred vices: it is even their natural tendency to produce such effects; they will produce them, unless the temptation be watchfully and firmly resisted: and what can be more opposite to the spirit of Christianity, or more fatal to our Salvation?—But when we are called to partake of the afflictions of CHRIST, and to fill up that portion of them^s which falls to our share among all his sincere followers, these fears are greatly abated or removed; we become more sure of our way; we are put in a condition to resemble our SAVIOUR more completely, and consequently to render our hope and joy more solid. *‘ These things have I spoken unto you, says he, that in me ye might have peace: In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.’*—Further,

2dly,

^s Col. i. 24.

^s John xvi. 33.

II. 2dly, THE sufferings of CHRIST yield us this great and sure comfort in our afflictions, to know that they are no proof of GOD's hatred or neglect respecting us ; nay, no obstacles to his highest favour. And this lesson, necessary as it is to our religious peace, we are not a little backward to learn. The vanities of the world are continually deceiving our minds, and corrupting our hearts. How prone are we to value temporal riches, honours, and prosperity, as the greatest blessings ; to place all our happiness in them ; and to seek them with our whole heart and soul, even to the neglect of virtue, and at the expence of innocence ? And with what ardour do we fly over sea and land, through fire and water, to shun poverty, and to escape affliction, as the worst of evils ? How apt also are these external things to influence and regulate the measures of our behaviour toward others ? It is a mark of uncommon virtue to *contemn a vile person* when surrounded with pomp and affluence ; though vice is naturally contemptible, and would never fail to be treated as such, if it had not some foreign ornament to recommend it. The favourites of fortune, nevertheless, though deficient in

K k merit,

• Pſal. xv.

merit, or destitute of it, are sure to be followed and fawned on by a crowd of obsequious flatterers; while the poor man, whatever his merit be, is often overlooked, forgotten, and despised. We carry this dangerous abuse still farther; for we often measure the favour and displeasure of GOD toward us by our outward circumstances, and judge of our spiritual condition by the share we have in the goods of fortune. Are we prosperous in the world? then we conclude that all is well with respect to GOD and our souls. Are we disappointed, humbled, and afflicted? then GOD is angry with us, and hath forsaken us. Thus, in opposition to the Oracle of Wisdom^w, we pretend to distinguish GOD's love and hatred by the visible appearances of a prosperous or adverse lot: And such sentiments are as hurtful, as they are erroneous; for they tend to keep us in ignorance of our own state, and to make us form uncharitable judgements concerning that of others, to nourish pride and insolence in the rich, and to leave the poor and unfortunate no consolation.

BUT, ought not the sufferings of the SON of GOD, if nothing else can do it, to free
our

^w Eccles. ix. 1.

our minds from these illusions? Are not his humiliations, and the glory that followed them, sufficient to secure us against the infection of maxims so injurious to our virtue and our inward quiet? Certainly, in the Cross of CHRIST, we behold the crucifixion of whatever is most splendid and dazzling in this world, separate from truth and virtue; every thing set at nought when compared with *them*, and covered with contempt and ignominy; *them*, on the contrary, honoured, magnified, and made glorious, though separated from every thing else; we behold the consummation of moral excellence, joined to the greatest temporal disgrace and misery. And this example forces us to acknowledge, for our comfort and encouragement in well-doing, that it is very possible to be beloved of GOD, and yet sorely wounded with outward trouble; yea to be the singular object of the Divine favour and complacency, and at the same time *despised and rejected of men, and esteemed by them to be stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted*^x.

IN fact, the death of CHRIST seems to have been purposely designed, among other uses, to rectify in us the misconceptions here mentioned. *He gave Himself for us,*

K k 2

says

^x Isa. liii. 3, 4.

says the great Apostle, *that he might deliver us from this present evil world*, (that is, from the errors, the corruptions, and vices of this present world), *according to the will of God the Father*^v. And what can be more effectual to cure our worldly prejudices and affections, than to see the Beloved SON of GOD, in whom he was well pleased, made a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and after a painful ministry, employed to promote the glory of his Father, and the good of men, the same person expiring on a cross, amidst the reproaches and insults of his persecutors?—Hence we conclude on the surest grounds, that affliction in this life is not absolutely the worst of evils; and particularly, that it carries in it no proof either of vengeance or of indifference on the part of GOD; that, in certain circumstances, and for a time, it may very fitly be made the portion of those who are most dear to him; that he may often see meet to visit his best servants with it, not as a testimony of his anger, but rather of his love; for the trial and exercise, and improvement of their virtues; for the sake of giving the world, in them, more eminent examples of goodness; and for preparing them to enjoy higher honours and rewards in the life to come. These are reasons

^v Gal. i. 4.

reasons sufficient to justify the rectitude of the Divine government, even in the afflictions of CHRIST, who knew no sin; and much more may they do the same with respect to ours. For, considering affliction as the remedy of our imperfection, and the chastisement of our sins, still we ought to bless God for it, and to make it a ground of comfort and good hope; because he may have, and we know from his word that he actually has, other motives for sending it, nothing akin to hatred or wrath. He may thereby kindly intend to shelter us from the manifold and great dangers which temporal prosperity doth usually bring with it; or to compel us to return, and keep ourselves united to him, who is the true source and center of our joy, by denying us other comforts, or embittering those we have. His design may be to teach us to serve him purely from the love of piety and righteousness, and the hope of Heaven, and not for the profits and pleasures of this world; or, at the worst, to correct our faults with a fatherly hand in this life, that we may be saved by a timely repentance from the more dreadful miseries of final condemnation.

THUS we are happily enabled to understand and relish those many Divine Oracles,

K k 3

which,

which, though paradoxical to worldly spirits, tend to alleviate affliction, by assuring us of the benefit of it: Such as, *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth^a. It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better^a. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted^b. Happy is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law^c. For, whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth^d. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him^e.* In such soothing terms does the Holy Spirit every where speak to us on this subject.— And while I am permitted to consider my afflictions in this favourable light, as the effects of my Father's love, as sent to me from above with a friendly intention, and though painful to flesh and blood, yet salutary to my soul, and productive of true happiness; I do not faint under them: I neither murmur impiously against Heaven, nor weakly bewail my lot before men. Through thy strength, O my God! I stand firm under the pressure

^a Lam. iii. 27.^a Eccles. vii. 2, 3.^b Matth. v. 4.^c Psal. xciv. 12.^d Heb. xii. 6.^e James i. 12.

pressure thou layest upon me, and abate nothing of heart or hope. Resuming fresh courage from the light of thy countenance, and entering into the magnanimous sentiments of thy holy servants, *I glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed*^f. These are the thoughts which GOD inspires: And shall a Christian really despair, or complain, because trouble is upon him, when he hears good men, who had less and fewer encouragements, so often attesting the advantages of affliction from their own experience, and praising GOD on account of it, saying, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes*^g. *Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I have kept thy word*^h. *I know, O Lord! that thy judgements are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me*ⁱ. Above all, when he contemplates JESUS, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour?—Surely, if we considered our afflictions according to the views of GOD, and entered into his holy and gracious designs in them, we should bear and improve them after another manner than we often do.—But,

K k 4

III.

^f Rom. v. 3. &c.^g Psal. cxix. 71.^h Verso 67.ⁱ Psal. cxix. 75.

III. *Thirdly*, To the assurance of God's love under our afflictions, we ought to add another stream of consolation, derived from the same source, the sufferings of CHRIST, which is the solid hope hereby afforded us of an ample reward to follow the patient enduring of them. In this Heavenly Saviour, GOD hath given us, not only a perfect model of virtue and obedience for our imitation, as before shewn, but the most magnificent example of reward for our encouragement. From the depth of human misery, he hath raised up JESUS to the highest pinnacle of celestial grandeur and felicity; an event in which all true Christians may well rejoice, both on their Master's account, and their own:—On his account, since they cannot but exult at the advancement and glory of one whom they so dearly love; as he said to his first followers, *If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father*^k: And on their own account, because he is risen, and exalted, not for himself alone, but for them too, and on purpose to crown them in due time with the like honours. They are allowed to behold their own future glory, in that which is now enjoyed by him; and in his elevation, they have a sure pledge of what is reserved for themselves. *I go*, said he, *to prepare a place*

^k John xiv. 28.

place for you; and I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also¹. CHRIST is for us entered into Heaven as our forerunner^m, to assure us that we are to follow in our order after him, and that the members shall be united to their Head in glory, as they were before in disgrace and sorrow.

AND on this account, especially, we ought to acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of God, in giving us a SAVIOUR who hath attained all his honours through deep abasement and suffering. We see reasons very satisfying to our minds, and very proper to excite the gratitude of our hearts, why it behoved this Divine Saviour, not only to suffer death, but a public, infamous, and excruciating death. *For it became him, says the Apostle, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many Sons unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through sufferingsⁿ.* The reasons of this high appointment were taken from our state and exigencies. Consider what we are—rational creatures, but weak, degenerate, mortal; placed here in a state of moral probation; liable, by the very constitution of our nature, to various troubles, and at last to inevitable death;

¹ John xiv. 2, 3.^m Heb. vi. 20.ⁿ Chap. ii. 10.

death; designed for immortality by the bounty of our Creator, but incapable of enjoying it, without going through a previous course of painful discipline.—What better method could be taken to bring us to our end as God's children, that is, to immortal Glory, with the Divine image impressed upon us, than by making the Captain of our Salvation perfect through sufferings? What could be more suitable, either to the perfections of God, or to the circumstances of us men? And what more effectual means could be employed, to make us embrace the offered salvation, to prepare us for it, and put us in the actual possession of it? For whatever else had been done toward this great end; if he who hath revealed and confirmed the will of God to us concerning it, and who was constituted our Leader and Guide to so sublime a happiness, had not himself passed to it through the same road of affliction and trial which falls to our lot; we could not have been so certain of our way in this dark and cloudy state, nor have looked so stedfastly for a happy conclusion of our troubles; nor could he have been such a Leader to us as our condition required. But when we see that our Blessed SAVIOUR, the First and Chief of all the SONS of GOD, hath before us, and for our sakes, undergone various
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rious severe afflictions in the cause of truth and virtue, submitted to the death of the Cross, and attained by that means immortal bliss himself, with the power of conferring the same on his followers; the troubles we are born to, do not discourage us; nor does it surprise us to find, that, *through many tribulations, we must enter into the Kingdom of GOD.* We thus become disposed to seek it with steadfastness and joy, whatever we may suffer here below, because our Guide hath shewn us, not in words only, but, in a still more affecting manner, by his own example, that there is nothing truly or finally evil to be met with in his way, that those who obey and imitate him, have no cause of desolating fear or grief in the worst situations; and that they ought not, by any afflictions of this life, or even by an ignominious and miserable death, to be shaken from the hope of immortality. Now, this hope is an anchor of the soul, cast within the vale, or fixed in Heaven; and it keeps us calm and unmoved like Heaven itself, amidst the greatest tempests that arise in this lower world, at least prevents us from being carried adrift: For it tells us, *that if we be dead with CHRIST, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him^p: we shall be glorified together^q.*

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^p 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

^q Rom. viii. 17.

To conclude this point, hope is a principle of the utmost importance in the life of man. It is it which gives a spring to the vigour and activity of youth, and which supports and revives the decaying strength of old age. It adds a double relish to the joy of prosperity, and softens the rugged hand of affliction. The best cordial to our drooping spirits; it bears up, and cheers the mind under the heaviest pressures of outward trouble. It forms a principal ingredient of our happiness, in every change of fortune; and when it forsakes us, small is the satisfaction we can receive from the highest pleasures of the world. Even the hope of temporal good is not without its use, for it commonly proves a great source both of industry and virtue among men; but it is comparatively mean and defective, often delusive, and always unsatisfactory. It is the hope of the Gospel alone, that is adequate to our necessities; it is it only that can give light and comfort to our minds in the gloomiest scenes of Providence, and make us smile at the approach of the King of Terrors. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in GOD; for I shall yet praise him who is the light of my countenance, and my GOD.* We may be at times

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* Psal. xlii. 11.

in heaviness through manifold temptations^b; but the hope which maketh not ashamed, enables us always to rejoice; for when our trial is finished, we shall receive the crown of life, which the LORD hath promised to them that love him^c; and our stedfast faith will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of JESUS CHRIST^d. We know it, we are assured of it, from his exaltation after death; nor can we ever faint under the burdens of human life, while we consider that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory^e.—But there remaineth still,

IV. A further consolation arising from the afflictions of CHRIST, and a very great one it is in the midst of our sharpest trials; not only to be assured of the general protection of ALMIGHTY GOD, which is never wanting to good men; but to be supported moreover by what his goodness hath specially provided for us, the sympathy and succour of our Divine LORD, who bears to us ward all those kind and favourable dispositions which we could reasonably wish for in a Mediator, a Governour, and a Judge. With these high offices JESUS is invested in our behalf, as the reward of his obedient sufferings; and
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^b 1 Pet. i. 6. ^c James i. 12. ^d 1 Pet. i. 7. ^e 2 Cor. iv. 17.

by his sufferings, the Scripture teaches us, that he was qualified for discharging them in a way peculiarly fitted to administer comfort and encouragement to us. On this ground, chiefly, the Apostle builds that noble apology which he makes to the Hebrew believers^w, and to all the Jewish nation, for the humiliations of the MESSIAH, which gave so much offence, and were of such hard digestion to them. He does not content himself with saying, that so GOD appointed it, and such was his sovereign will; but he mentions divers reasons why it was fit it should be so. He shews that the Cross of CHRIST was a dispensation most conducive to the end which GOD had in view of saving men^x; most congruous to the near relation which subsists between CHRIST and his followers, as children of the same Father^y; most suited to the state and circumstances of mankind in this life, and to the nature of the office he was destined to execute in their behalf^z. Upon this last particular, he has these consoling words: *Wherefore, in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to GOD, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: For, in that He himself hath suffered, being tempted,*

^w Heb. ii. ^x Ver. 10. ^y Ver. 11. ^z Ver. 14,—16.

ed, he is able to succour them that are tempted^a. His experience of our trials gave him not only the power, but the inclination to succour us. Again, We have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin^b. CHRIST is therefore one who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way^c; because, though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him^d.

INDEED had our Redeemer been endowed with the same power to save us which JESUS CHRIST now possesses, but without being allied to us by the same common nature, and without having had previous trial of our infirmities and afflictions, the case might have been the same that it is as to the final accomplishment of our hopes, but it would have been very different with respect to our present consolation. Not to speak of the example, we should have wanted in him the bowels of a fellow-sufferer.—Whereas now we have the comfort to know his readiness to pity and befriend us in our straits, the rejoicing assurance that he bears toward

^a Heb. ii. 17, 18. ^b Ch. iv. 15. ^c Ch. v. 2. ^d Ver. 8, 9.

toward us, the sentiments and feelings of a Man, while his power to help us is that of a GOD. He is a Divine and all-powerful Ruler, raised up for us from among ourselves ; and who preserves still, in his glorified state, the same tenderness and friendship for us, of which he gave such strong testimonies in the days of his flesh.

WHAT more could we desire ? Are we in need of wholesome instruction and counsel ? His Word is in our hands, his Ministers are appointed to preach it to us, and his Spirit is ready to guide us into all truth.—Do we want the pardon of sin ? With full authority, he says to every sincere penitent, *Be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee*.—Would we be furnished with strength to perform our duty, or to bear our distresses ? Let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace, where we are sure to find whatever is needful for us in the way of salvation. He appears in the presence of GOD for us, who loved us unto death, and to whom GOD never denied any-thing. And having such an High Priest over the House of GOD, justly are we required, or rather encouraged, to draw near to him every day of our lives, with true hearts, in full assurance of faith ; and well may it be expected of us, that we should *hold fast*
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the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end^c.

MOREOVER, as under the patronage of this Mighty PRINCE and SAVIOUR, we may safely rely on all needful assistance amidst our present trials; so, in the end, we may for the same reason assure ourselves of all equitable allowances being made for our involuntary frailties and imperfections. In the governments of this world, it is reckoned a high privilege for men to be judged by their peers; because such judgement, on account of a certain fellow-feeling which presides in it, is likely to be more humane and tender, and more remote from any-thing of undue severity. It leans always to the side of mercy, where there is any room for it. This privilege GOD ALMIGHTY hath been pleased to grant us, in that final judgement which we must all undergo, and which will determine our fate for ever. For, *to JESUS CHRIST He hath given authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of Man^f. This crucified SAVIOUR is He who was ordained of GOD to be the Judge of quick and dead^g. GOD hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof*

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^c Heb. iii. 6.

^f John v. 27.

^g Acts x. 42.

He hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead^h. Mark the condescension of GOD: He hath appointed a Man to be the Judge of men; and though the judgement, we are sure, will be according to truth, yet this gracious appointment gives us to understand, for our comfort, that it will have as great a mixture of mildness, favour, and compassion in it, as the case can possibly admit. It is true, among men, we often find that none are apt to be more hard-hearted* and injurious in their treatment of others, than those who have suddenly risen from low stations to great power and authority. But that generally, if not always, happens only in ambitious men, who are intoxicated with prosperity, who have risen without merit, or even by demerit, and whose undeserved elevation hath added new virulence to the innate naughtiness and pride of their hearts. Nothing of that kind have we to fear in the JUDGE whom GOD hath given us. We have had good proof of the grace and benevolence of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. We know how he demeaned himself here below; and our faith teaches us, that his advancement hath made no change in his affection to us, for he is *the same yesterday,*

^h Acts xvii. 31.

* *Asperius nihil est humili, cum surgit in altum.*

*yesterday, and to-day, and for ever*¹. Not to mention how much his own glory is concerned in our eternal welfare: *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me*¹.—Such are the consolations and encouragements which CHRIST's faithful disciples may draw from his Cross; and by which they ought to be established in an inviolable adherence to the cause of holiness and virtue, whatever difficulties it may be attended with in this life. The Cross, which was so bitter a cup to Him for the time, turns out in its issues a majestic river, whose streams will for ever refresh and gladden the City of God^k.

AND thus we have endeavoured to shew the efficacy of CHRIST's blood, for recovering us from the dominion of sin, and confirming us in the practice of righteousness; as also for saving us from the condemnation and punishment due to unreclaimed vice in another world: which two things finish the Second and Last Part of our design. Many useful considerations belonging to the subject, may have escaped us; and I wish that the lessons insisted on, had been conveyed with more light and energy: Yet, what has

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¹ Heb. xiii. 8.¹ John xvii. 24.^k Psal. xlv.

been advanced, may, it is humbly hoped, be of some use for edifying meek and candid minds, who do not love to make Religion a subject of contention, or mere curiosity, but an instrument of their sanctification.— Revealed Truth is intended to restore and heal our diseased nature. It is addressed to the understanding of man, and, through the understanding, to the heart. It is therefore intelligible, and may, with reasonable attention, and honest views, be understood and known. It is consistent in every part with itself, and with reason, the original gift of God; satisfying to the mind, and productive of the wholesome fruits of righteousness, peace, and holy joy. If any-thing in the above Essay is deficient in these qualities, or contrary to them; or if any-thing of important practical use belonging to the subject treated of, hath been omitted; I have in so far missed my aim. However, as hinted in the beginning, it appears to me, that in handling any point of Religion, less hurt can arise from the undesigned omission of some things which are true and useful, than from the positive assertion of any-thing which will not bear the test of fair examination: And in practical subjects particularly, (of which kind I take all the points of true Religion to be), it seems better to confine one's self,

self, as much as possible, to what is, or must be, admitted by all who take the Scripture verity for their guide*, than to enlarge on matters which, though agreeable to some, may appear uncertain and disputable in the eyes of many, and those perhaps the most intelligent Christians. For, what all are

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* All Protestants at least, if not all Christians, profess to take the Holy Scriptures for the only rule of their faith and practice; to which end, it is necessary that every one endeavour to understand and apply those Scriptures in the best manner he can. This is his duty, and what he cannot neglect, or omit, without sin. He may be assisted by other interpreters, and may follow them more or less as he sees cause; but he cannot, consistently with the above principle, use any of them otherwise than as helps for understanding the meaning of the Divine Oracles. In these Oracles, his faith ought to be firm and implicit, even when he does not understand them; since, what I believe to be the Word of God, I am sure is true, whether the sense of it be apparent to me or not. But when an uninspired man interprets the Oracle to me, and I do not comprehend his meaning, or cannot perceive it to be the true sense of the Oracle, I am not bound to the same implicit faith in him, nor can yield it, without renouncing my Supreme and Divine Rule, which I ought ever to adhere to.— It may be said, that however a man may interpret the Holy Scripture for himself, or his own private use, he ought not to communicate these interpretations to others, if different from what they have been accustomed to. Now, had this maxim been universally followed, it is certain we should have wanted many excellent helps for understanding the Sacred Scriptures, which we now have. Besides, this maxim seems to require that men should extinguish the candle which the LORD hath lighted up, or put it under a bushel; that they should

agreed in, would be sufficient, were it rightly improved, to make them much better and happier than they often are, if not also to reconcile their differences.—Let me now conclude with a few general reflections on the whole.

I. WE

should quench the Spirit, despise Prophecys, imprison the Gospel, and hold the Truth in unrighteousness. It forbids Christians to help one another in trying the spirits, in proving all things, and in distinguishing Truth from Error. If one sets himself humbly to enquire into what the Scriptures have spoken upon any particular point, and submits the fruit of his enquiries to the candid judgement of others, leaving them free to receive or reject the same as to them it shall seem meet, what offence does he commit against GOD or Man? (Or rather, does he not do as CHRIST hath commanded^a?—If, indeed, he should insist on his interpretations being received by others, under pains and penalties, eternal or temporal; or, seeing those out of his power, should betake himself to railing and invective against such as presumed to differ from him, giving, in the mean time, no proof of his being endowed with supernatural illumination; he would commit an offence, and usurp an authority which does not belong to him.—While I hold the Scriptures to be the only rule of my faith, and myself to be fallible, am I warranted to deny my charity, or my communion, to you who follow the same rule, and with equal reverence, merely because you will not submit in every thing to my explications of it? In obedience to the most solemn and frequently-repeated injunctions of our Religion, we should endeavour, as much as possible, to be of one mind; and perhaps it will be found in fact that we often are so more than we suspect. We own the same rule, of which many parts, and those

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^a Matth. x. 27. Mark viii. 38.

I. WE ought to acknowledge and adore the wisdom of GOD in the Gospel dispensation. It is but an imperfect view of it that I have been able to give; and who can describe it in its full perfection? But even from what has been said, may we not perceive how well founded the Apostle of the Gentiles was, when, speaking of the redemption granted us through the blood of CHRIST, he declared that GOD *bath therein abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence*¹? and when he affirmed that CHRIST crucified, though to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, is in reality *the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God*^m? We may now form some judgment of the truth and propriety of these sayings, and others of the like kind. To make the ignominious death of CHRIST the means of reconciling

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¹ Eph. i. 8.^m 1 Cor. i. 24.

no doubt the most important, are too clear and certain to permit us to differ about them. To these our main care should be directed, and on them the stress of our Religion should be laid, according to the Apostle Paul's counsel, *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing*^b. Where unavoidable differences remain, as they always have, and probably always will remain, even after using all diligence to understand our rule, it behoves us to consider well whether these are of sufficient moment to break the Bond of Charity, or to divide the Body of CHRIST.

^b Philip. iii. 16.

sinners unto GOD, of destroying idolatry and vice, and of creating the world anew unto good works, surpassed all the shallow conceptions of human wisdom, and therefore would naturally be treated by many as foolishness.—But it was so much the more worthy of the only wise GOD. It is admired by the blessed Angels in Heaven: It will be the subject of immortal praises to the Glorified Saints: And even we on earth, O GOD! amidst all our darkness, are able, by the help of thy light, to see that it is marvellously adapted to abolish the fatal enmity which keeps sinners at a distance from Thee, to gain worshippers to Thee in spirit and truth, to form men of real worth, and qualify them for living with Thee in the mansions of Eternal Glory. Again,

II. WE may see with what justice and propriety St Paul gloried in the Cross of CHRIST; and resolved, comparatively speaking, to glory in nothing else. *God forbid*, says he, *that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*". For he considered the Cross not merely in itself, but in connection with its causes and consequences: And when he reflected how unmerited it was on the part of the Sufferer, what virtues it exhibit-
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* Gal. vi. 14.

ed in him, what ends it served, and what blessed fruits it produced; instead of being offended in CHRIST, or ashamed of him, he gloried in him the more on account of it, and thought his relation to a crucified SAVIOUR threw a greater lustre on him than he could have desired from all the preferments of the world. *To know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and to be made conformable to his death*^o, were titles of distinction more desirable and precious in his eyes, than the proudest honours of an ambitious and worldly minded Jew. And this he represents as a gift and benefit to all Christians; for, *unto you it is GIVEN*, says he, *in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for his sake*^p. To the like purpose speaks the Apostle Peter, *Rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings. If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye*^q. And of all the Apostles it is related, that having nobly sustained the first great shock of persecution they met with after Christ's ascension, *they departed from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name*^r. This was agreeable to the instructions he had given them, saying, *Blessed are ye when men shall revile*

^o Philip. iii. 10.

^p Chap. i. 29.

^q 1 Pet. iv. 13. &c.

^r Acts v. 41.

revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake: Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, &c.^s. Upon the same heroic principles did Moses act, when he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt^t.

WE may further perceive from this discourse, with how much reason the same Apostle Paul, though no mean proficient in human learning, *determined* (comparatively still we may believe) *not to know any thing among his Corinthian Disciples, save JESUS CHRIST, and Him crucified^u*. For, this alone, taken in its due extent, doth really comprehend all spiritual and saving knowledge. It is a summary of the whole Gospel. ‘The doctrine of Christ crucified (says an eminent Modern Divine *)’ is the instituted mean of producing and nourishing the divine life, and should be the center of our sermons; in reference to, and dependence on which, other subjects ought to be considered.’ Thus he:—And as this was the doctrine

^s Matth. v. 11. ^t Heb. xi. 24. &c. ^u 1 Cor. ii. 2.

* Dr Erskine.

doctrine by which God chose to demolish idolatry, and to restore true religion and virtue in the earth; we may presume it will (if handled justly and scripturally) be always most effectual for *casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*^v. —Further,

III. WHAT has been said may serve to shew us at least one probable reason why a particular ordinance* is instituted for the perpetual celebration of CHRIST's Death in the Church, rather than of any other fact or event relating to him. The miraculous conception, the nativity, the resurrection, and the ascension of CHRIST, not to mention any other, are important facts in his history, peculiar to him in some respects among all that have ever lived on this earth; they are also essential articles of our faith, and some of them as necessary to establish our hope and comfort as his death itself: yet there are no rites or festivals appointed by Divine authority, as memorials of them. Indeed the change of the Sabbath from the seventh

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^v 2 Cor. x. 5.

* See Dr Sam. Chandler's Sermons, particularly that on the Sufferings of CHRIST.

to the first day of the week, stands as a perpetual monument of his resurrection, but without any particular ceremony to commemorate that event. Why then is the remembrance of CHRIST's Death provided for by a solemn and perpetual ordinance? It is highly probable that our LORD did hereby especially intend to counteract the blind and malicious policy of the Jewish Rulers, who thought to suppress his Religion by the ignominious death of its Author; in opposition to which, he obliged his Disciples to honour that circumstance which the world held to be of all most disgraceful, and taught them from it to draw new motives of zeal and attachment to his service.--But another reason might be, because this event is, as we have seen, of the first importance in the Christian scheme, and all the rest stand in close connection with it. This is the grand link in that wonderful chain of facts which are recorded in the Gospel History; this is the corner stone of our Salvation. Look backward from it, and you see a doctrine of eternal truth and righteousness now ratified and sealed with the blood of its Author, an example of unspotted holiness carried to its utmost perfection, sin expiated by the most acceptable of all sacrifices, and the fire of Divine Love burning with peculiar force, in
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order to consume sin, and save the sinner.— Look forward from the same event, and you see in it the ground of celestial honour and advancement, first to our Redeemer himself, and after him, and by his means, for all the children of GOD. You see Divine forgiveness, assistance, protection, yea immortal life and glory, absolutely secured to you in the path of sincere obedience. The Death of CHRIST connects together his mortal and immortal life, his abasement and his exaltation, his ministry on earth, and his ministry in heaven; and presents to us, as it were in one single view, the whole of his mediation in our behalf: so that the commemoration of it is in effect the commemoration of his history from beginning to end. Most fit it is therefore, that this great event should be celebrated by CHRIST's Faithful Disciples, according to the commandment of their LORD. We should rejoice in the wisdom and grace of the institution, and always perform it with pleasure and thankfulness, with hearts dead to sin, but alive unto GOD, and with the joyful and certain prospect of that blessed day when our LORD shall be revealed from Heaven, to give us an eternal deliverance from all the evils of mortality, and to complete our salvation.—Further still,

IV.

IV. WE cannot omit to observe what a rich fund of practical instruction the Death of CHRIST opens up to us, both in its History, and in its Doctrine. It affords no encouragement to sloth and remissness, or to presumption and security on our part, or to the vain fallacious hope of being saved in our sins; nor is it barely consistent with our moral obligations: But it contains the strongest engagements, and the most forcible motives to repentance and every good work; and assures us more convincingly than any thing else could do, of inevitable destruction awaiting the impenitent. To bring sinners into a state of favour with GOD, without repentance and a holy life, was no part of the plan of Divine Wisdom, under the Gospel dispensation; it was never attempted by the REDEEMER of mankind; and with the profoundest respect for his character, let me add, that it would have been a vain attempt even for him. What!—reconcile sinners to GOD*, while they continue to hate his govern-

* ‘ The Scripture notion of *Reconciliation* may be taken
 ‘ from Matth. v. 23, 24, 25. Being *reconciled*, signifies the
 ‘ offending party’s making his peace with the party of-
 ‘ fended, by giving him proper satisfaction, and agreeing
 ‘ to his terms of accommodation and friendship. It is not
 ‘ said any where in Scripture, that GOD is reconciled to
 ‘ us; but we are reconciled to GOD. Of which the sole
 ‘ reason is, that He is the party offended, and we are the
 ‘ party

government, and to trample upon his laws ! It is an absurdity in itself, a contradiction to the nature of things, as well as to all the Divine Oracles ; and you shall as soon overturn the Throne of GOD. There was no other way by which the SAVIOUR of the world reconciled, or could reconcile sinners to his Father, but by converting and sanctifying them, and bringing them back to the path of duty, from which they had gone astray. Accordingly, this was the aim of all his labours and sufferings, of his life and death, of his whole mediation on earth and in heaven ; and if after all that he hath done, and still does for that purpose, sinners do still continue in their sins, they frustrate, with regard to themselves, all the effects of his mediation : Let them profess to honour his person as much as they will, and call him

‘ party offending. Now, the party offending is always said
‘ to be reconciled to the party offended, and not on the
‘ contrary. We are reconciled to GOD, when his anger is
‘ turned away, and we are admitted into his favour.—From
‘ its not being said in Scripture that GOD is reconciled to
‘ us, some have argued, that GOD is not displeased or an-
‘ gry even at impenitent sinners ; contrary to the whole
‘ tenor of Scripture. They ought to have concluded quite
‘ contrary, that he is displeased with them ; and that it
‘ behoves them to reconcile themselves to him, by comply-
‘ ing with the terms of reconciliation he hath proposed in
‘ the Gospel, without which they must perish.’

Theological Repository, vol. ii. p. 3.

him LORD and SAVIOUR a thousand times, they ought to know of a truth that he is no SAVIOUR to them ; but is, on the contrary, set for their eternal ruin.

Now, then, we are Ambassadors for Christ, said St Paul, (and so may all faithful Ministers of the Gospel say after him), *as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God*^w. The terms of your reconciliation, previously settled in the Councils of Eternal Wisdom, are plainly revealed to you by CHRIST ; who sends the Apostles and Ministers of his Word, as his FATHER sent Him, to announce them to men, and to engage, if possible, their compliance with them. We can neither make them easier, nor more difficult than they are ; we cannot accommodate them to men's humours, prejudices, passions, and vices ; we cannot alter one jot of them, without exposing ourselves to a condemnation equally just and dreadful. When we press you, therefore, according to these terms, to be reconciled unto GOD, it is GOD himself that beseeches you by us ; and he that despiseth, despiseth not men, but GOD. How long, Sinner, shall a Gracious GOD wait for you ? How long will you despise his patience and
forbear-

^w 2 Cor. v. 20.

forbearance? How long will you go on treasuring up for yourself wrath against the day of wrath? Are you resolved to die in your sins, and to abide the utmost effects of omnipotent vengeance? Think what you do. You know not what it is to fall into the hands of the Living God. You enjoy still an accepted time, and a day of salvation; and you hear the voice of Divine Mercy kindly warning you, like Lot out of Sodom, to *escape for your life*. Shut not your ears against it; harden not your heart. The time may soon come, when you shall hear it no more. Are you not yet convinced that God desires to save you, earnestly desires it; and at the same time that he never will save you, but in the way of obedience and holiness? *He hath made Him to be sin for you who knew no sin, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him. We beseech you, receive not this Grace of God in vain.*—Once more let me infer,

V. WHAT may appear with sufficient evidence from all the preceding discourse, That whatever power there is in the Gospel, which is properly the Doctrine of the Cross, for promoting the reformation of men, this power is entirely of a spiritual and moral kind, consisting of such arguments and mo-

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tives as are proper to determine the minds of rational creatures, and make them yield a willing obedience to it, from a conviction of its Divine truth and excellence. Though it be attended and supported with all the power of the ALMIGHTY, it uses no violence or compulsion to bring men under subjection to it, against their wills; neither indeed can it do so consistently with its nature and design. The blind and impotent zeal, or the wicked policy of men, may incline them to force others, in religious matters, to an outward compliance with their wills. Too many instances of that have been seen even among Christians. But GOD puts no value on a constrained and unwilling obedience. It is his glory to make a people willing in the day of his power, to subdue their hearts by the force of truth, and to reign there by a sincere and undissembled love. How easy had it been for him, by speedy and tremendous judgements, to quell all opposition against the Gospel of his SON, and cause it to be received immediately, throughout the whole world, with the most prompt submission? But this was not suitable to his adorable wisdom; for his ways are not as our ways, neither are his thoughts as ours. It was enough for him, so to exert his power in favour of this heavenly doctrine,

doctrine, as that every one who honestly attended to it, might be fully satisfied that it came from him : But after that, he left every one free to reject or embrace it as he pleased, only reserving to himself the right of calling all men to account for their conduct, and giving them the suitable rewards of it in another world. *Will ye also go away ?* said our SAVIOUR to his most intimate Disciples, putting it to their own choice^x.

OUR final salvation, or our deliverance from the grave by a resurrection to immortal life, is a work which will be effected without us, and can only be effected by that *mighty power whereby Christ is able even to subdue all things unto himself*^y. Our preparatory salvation in this world, or our deliverance from the slavery of sin, and recovery to holiness and virtue, is also the effect of his power, but not without the concurrence of our wills and endeavours. It can only be accomplished through the salutary operation of the Doctrine of the Gospel on our hearts and lives. The Miracles, the Righteousness, the Death, the Resurrection, and Exaltation of CHRIST, are all of them causes of this Salvation to us ; but none of

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^x John vi. 67.

^y Philip. iii. 21.

them can give it to us immediately, and of themselves. They tend to sanctify and heal our souls, no other way than by exciting our attention to the Doctrine of the Gospel, by forming and strengthening in us the belief of its truth, by giving it its due weight and authority in our minds, and persuading us to obey it; to all which indeed they afford very powerful and affecting motives. But it is the Word of GOD alone, that *is able to save our souls*². *We are begotten of GOD, and made his children only by the Word of Truth*^a; which is the heavenly feed that regenerates us. We purify our souls by obeying the truth: *Sanctify them through thy Truth: thy Word is Truth*^b. The oblation of CHRIST's body on the Cross, will not benefit his followers, unless they be duly influenced by considering the doctrinal instruction it contains, and the moral purposes which it serves. It supplies great and weighty arguments for virtue, additional to those which are derived from the best improvement of the Light of Nature. But the influence of Moral Truth, whether natural or revealed, is liable to be resisted, and rendered ineffectual, by the inattention, carelessness, obstinacy, and perverseness of sinners; which shews us both why the Gospel, the last and most perfect revelation

² James i. 12.^a 1 Pet. i. 22.^b John xvii. 17.

revelation of God's will, is so unprofitable to many who enjoy it, and what we must do to make it profitable and salutary to ourselves. By a faithful obedience to this Divine Word, we shall be purified and saved for ever from the dominion of sin: On the other hand, if we do not hearken to the words of CHRIST, and keep his commandments, we can neither be reconciled to God by his death, nor saved by his life.

BUT with regard to the means of Salvation, surely GOD may appeal to us Christians, even against ourselves, with still greater force of conviction than he did to his people of old, in these memorable words: *Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What more could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?*—For, what extraordinary and surprizing methods hast Thou now taken, O FATHER of Mercies! to reclaim and save a perishing world? And what hast Thou omitted which could be done for that purpose, consistently with the nature of man? Thou hast shewn us fully what is good, and what Thou requirest of us. The practice thereof Thou hast enforced by every proper sanction of reward and punishment; and hast likewise drawn us to
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^c Isa. v. 3.

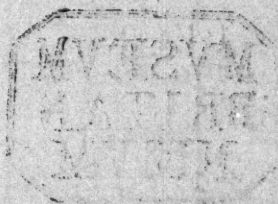
it by demonstrations of Love, and by the most perfect example. Thou hast moreover given rest to our souls with respect to the pardon of all our sins, when truly repented of and forsaken; the acceptance of our sincere endeavours to do our duty, amid unavoidable infirmities and temptations; and all needful assistance in the doing of it. Thou hast called me to the glorious hope of immortality, and furnished me with whatever conduces to fit me for the possession of endless happiness. What more have I to ask of Thee, O my GOD! but a heart to value and improve these benefits?—Yes undoubtedly I must now confess, that if I perish, I shall perish deservedly, through my own fault; but if I be so happy as to obtain that Eternal Salvation which I hope and earnestly pray for, it will be to the praise of the Glory of thy Grace, through JESUS CHRIST. Amen.

THE END.



E R R A T A.

Page	Line
21.	3. from the top, <i>Omit</i> of
67.	1. <i>For</i> Priest <i>read</i> Priests
99.	10. from the top, <i>For</i> unreasonable <i>r.</i> unseasonable
<i>ib.</i>	22. from the top, <i>Omit</i> the
244.	Note. <i>For</i> Benjabin Mordecai <i>r.</i> Benjamin Ben Mordecai.
259.	Note. <i>For</i> Id. <i>ibid.</i> <i>r.</i> Whichcot's Aphorisms.
310.	Note, l. 5. from the bottom, <i>For</i> that <i>r.</i> the
313.	7. from the bottom, <i>Omit</i> unto
325.	8. ditto, <i>Insert</i> it <i>after</i> purchase
397.	12. from the top, <i>For</i> passeth <i>r.</i> passeth
441.	4. ditto, <i>For</i> plained <i>r.</i> explained



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